



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

Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Wagga Wagga

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

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About this Report

The ACBC National Centre for Pastoral Research is pleased to provide you with this report on the Plenary Council project.

The findings in this report are a summary of submissions that were received from your diocese in Phase One of the Plenary Council process called 'Listening and Dialogue'. The National Centre for Pastoral Research was granted ethics approval for the data analysis of this stage in November 2018 through the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Christian Research Association.

The online process for submissions in Phase One opened on 20 May 2018 and ran until 6 March 2019. Due to the high response rate in the last two months, this deadline was extended to 13 March 2019.

The findings in this report include data from all submissions from your diocese that were received online, along with those received via email or in hard copy format, such as letters, books and submissions made through the 2018 Christmas card campaign.

The analysis provided in this report is mainly quantitative in nature and explores the demographic characteristics of individuals and groups that participated in the process. Some examples of these characteristics examined in the report are age, sex, country of birth, location and religion. This analysis was done using Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software.

The report also includes a list of themes that were discussed by participants in their submissions related to the question: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* A complete list of themes that were discussed nationally can be found in the report *Listen To What The Spirit Is Saying: Final Report for the Plenary Council Phase I: Listening and Dialogue*. This analysis was done using NVivo software.

Along with the list of themes, we have also included in this report the submissions of participants who consented to have their submission made public as well as released to their diocese. These submissions (made in response to Question 1: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*) are published in full but have been de-identified in keeping with ethical protocols. Several participants made their submission through uploaded documents, while others uploaded additional material as part of their submission. These documents have been provided to the bishop of your diocese in electronic format.

The latter sections of this report contain a sample list of questions received from your diocese in response to Question 2: *What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?* Along with this, a number of stories of faith or Church are shared, which were submitted by participants in response to Question 3: *Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?*

We hope you find this report insightful and helpful as we continue our work on the project.

Trudy Dantis

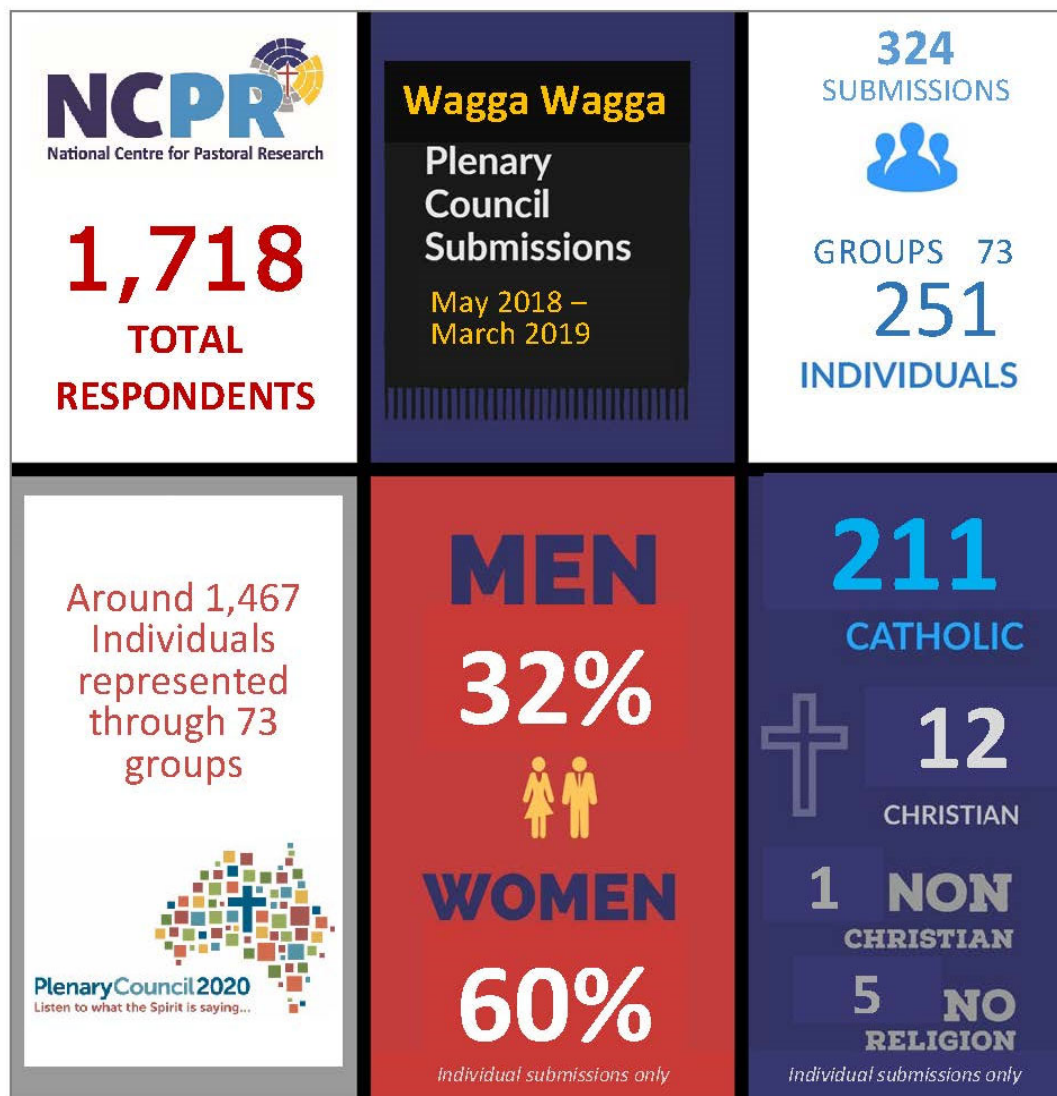
Paul Bowell

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 – Wagga Wagga

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 Wagga Wagga, we received a total of 324 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 183 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another 51 were unsure if they had. About 89 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 324 submissions, 73 submissions were from groups or organisations and 251 submissions were from individuals. There were 1,467 people represented through the 73 groups. It is important to note, however, that not all groups completed this question, so total group numbers may be under-represented.

Overall, the total number of respondents from your diocese was 1,718.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	324
<i>Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?</i>	
Yes	183
No	89
Not sure	51
Not stated	1
Total	324
Submissions received from groups or organisations	73
Submissions received from individuals	251
Total	324

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 251 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 Wagga Wagga. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 45 per cent (114) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 50-54, 55-59 and 70-74 years age groups (19 responses each).

At the close of submissions, there were only 20 individual submissions received from those aged under 25.

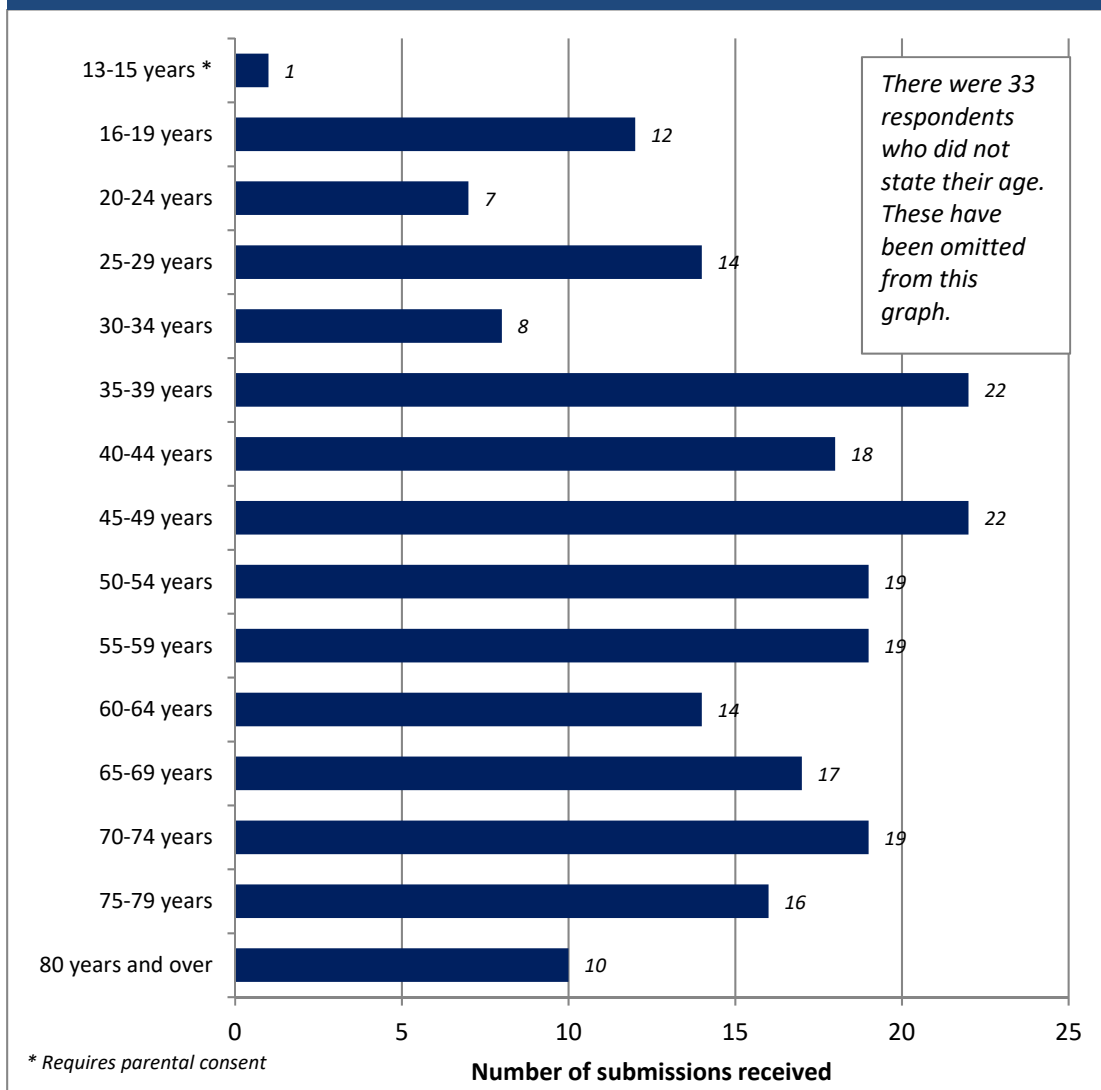
Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there were 12 individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

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 was one individual submission made from this age group in your diocese.

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

13-15 years *	1
16-19 years	12
20-24 years	7
25-29 years	14
30-34 years	8
35-39 years	22
40-44 years	18
45-49 years	22
50-54 years	19
55-59 years	19
60-64 years	14
65-69 years	17
70-74 years	19
75-79 years	16
80 years and over	10
Not stated	33
Total	251

** Requires parental consent*

Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)

Sex of Respondents

Over half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (60%), while a further 32 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 80 men and 151 women who made submissions. Two respondents preferred not to state their sex, while 18 respondents did not answer this question.

Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)	
Female	151
Male	80
Prefer not to say	2
Not stated	18
Total	251

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (82%) were born in Australia. Just under eight per cent came from other countries, while around ten 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	206	82.1
Italy	6	2.4
Other Countries	14	5.6
Not stated	25	10.0
Total	251	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	206	82.1
Other English-speaking country	5	2.0
Non-English-speaking country	15	6.0
Not stated	25	10.0
Total	251	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	181	72.1
Other English speaking country	7	2.8
Non-English speaking country	33	13.1
Not stated	30	12.0
Total	251	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	168	66.9
Other English-speaking country	11	4.4
Non-English-speaking country	41	16.3
Not stated	31	12.4
Total	251	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 three individuals who identified themselves in this way, representing just over one per cent of all individual respondents.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	3
No	223
Not stated	25
Total	251

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 251 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 211 respondents (84%) were Catholic. Twelve respondents were from other Christian denominations while there was one from a non-Christian religion. A further 22 respondents did not state their religion and five respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)	Person	Percent
Catholic	211	84.1
Other Christian:		
Anglican	6	2.4
Baptist	1	0.4
Uniting Church	2	0.8
Presbyterian and Reformed	1	0.4
Orthodox	1	0.4
Other Christian	1	0.4
Non Christian:		
Islam	1	0.4
Other religion	0	0.0
No religion	5	2.0
Not stated	22	8.8
Total	251	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 141 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were 45 respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while 15 respondents considered themselves Catholic but were not involved or described their participation in other terms. A further ten respondents described themselves in another way or did not answer the question.

Table 7: Religious description (for those who answered 'Catholic' to previous question)	Female	Male	Not stated	Total
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other church activities	88	53	0	141
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	36	9	0	45
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	3	1	0	4
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	6	5	0	11
Other	2	4	1	7
Not stated	0	2	1	3
Total	135	74	2	211

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 73 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 1,467 individuals were represented through these groups. However, ten groups did not report their numbers of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be considerably higher.

While 44 group submissions provided a group name, 29 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 West Wagga Catholic Parish with around 500 members. There were also a number of other parish and school groups such as the Marian Catholic College with 156 participants and Xavier High School Albury with 90 members. There were 12 other groups with 20 members or more.

Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese	
Name of group	Group size
West Wagga Catholic Parish	500
Marian Catholic College	156
Xavier High School Albury	90
Vieiras	34
Albury Young Adults	33
Sacred Heart Koorringal Parish	30
St Joseph's Parish, Leeton NSW 2705	30
Sacred Heart Parish Griffith plenary council team	26
St Anne's North Albury	22
St Francis de Sales Regional College	22
St Francis De Sales Regional College, Leeton	22
St Joseph's Primary School	21
Group of Parishioners.	20
Sacred Heart Parish	20
Vianney College, Wagga Wagga	20
CACW Wagga Wagga	19
Sacred Heart Church	18
St Mary's parish Corowa	18
St Mary's Primary School, Yoogali	16
St Mary's Primary School Yoogali	16

Age and Sex of Group Members

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

The under 20 years age group was the largest group represented with 234 members. This was followed by the group aged 50-69 with 225 members. There was no age provided for around 500 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	234
20 - 29 years	87
30 - 49 years	192
50 - 69 years	225
70 and over	169
Unknown	500
Total	1,407

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

Of the total 1,422 group members whose sex was reported, 58 per cent (827) were female and 42 per cent (595) 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	827
Male	595
Total	1,422

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



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1

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

THEMES DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

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

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

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

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

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

- Love God, Love neighbour (Chapter 4)
 - *Care for neighbour* (p. 36)
 - *Greater focus on Jesus Christ* (p. 30)
 - *Better faith formation* (p. 38)
 - *Greater focus on the Word of God* (p. 31)
 - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching* (p. 32)
 - *Being a witness in society* (p. 34)
 - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God* (p. 29)
- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
 - *Greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments* (p. 64)
 - *Emphasis on praying the Rosary* (p. 65)
 - *Holy Orders - Ending celibacy/ allowing priests to marry* (p. 66)
 - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women* (p. 69)
- Leadership and Church governance (Chapter 7)
 - *Ending clericalism* (p. 80)
 - *Greater role for women* (p. 83)
 - *New leadership and governance model* (p. 91)
 - *New model of Church, diocese, parish* (p. 93)
 - *Becoming a Vatican II Church* (p. 94)
 - *Greater involvement of the laity* (p. 84)
 - *Greater leadership from bishops* (p. 87)
 - *Greater leadership from priests* (p. 88)
 - *Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood* (p. 90)

- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Greater Inclusion of all* (p. 108)
 - *Fighting for human rights issues* (p. 110)
 - *Ending discrimination of LGBTI* (p. 110)

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

- *Inclusion of the divorced and remarried* (p. 46)
- *Sharing the faith with others* (p. 128)
- *Outreach to youth* (p. 124)
- *Teaching authentic Catholic faith* (p. 151)
- *Stronger parish communities* (p. 156)
- *Different translation of the Mass - emphasis on inclusive language* (p. 56)
- *Focus on mission, being missionary disciples* (p. 130)
- *Modernise Church teachings* (p. 169)
- *More transparency and accountability regarding clergy sexual abuse* (p. 102)
- *The Mass – Eucharistic adoration* (p. 51)

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 37 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.

We are being asked to return to the pure job of preaching the Gospel. The Church in Australia has become sick with bureaucracy and an obsession with failed and failing Catholic schools which have produced at least two generations of Catholics whose political affiliations and actions oppose the Gospel. We need to consider the radical step of abandoning Catholic schools as a means of education of children as a failed experiment and return to the much more organic means of passing on the faith by focusing on adult education and formation. Such a step will cut deeply into government funding that the Church receives, but let's be serious: the screws are beginning to tighten to the point where the Church is going to be faced with the clear choice of fidelity to Christ or the embrace of whatever 30 pieces of silver looks like today.

It seems to me that this is starting in the wrong place. The question assumes a shared understanding of what the term "God" means. In fact there is a range of understandings and where any individual is located in that range will determine her/his response. Perhaps it might be more effective at the beginning to have participants share how they see God and to challenge them with the picture presented by Jesus and which, more recently, has been clearly enunciated by Pope Francis. Only when we commence with a Gospel picture of God can we hope to properly answer this question and to do so in a way that corresponds to the vision authoritatively set out by the Second Vatican Council in three principles: 1) the Church exists for a SOLITARY goal—to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit [Joy and Hope par.3]; 2) All [the baptised] share a true EQUALITY with regard to the dignity and activity common to all the faithful for building up the body of Christ. [Light of Nations, par 32.] "Building up the Body of Christ" is, of course, another way of describing the solitary goal. 3) What specifically characterises

the laity is their SECULAR nature. ... the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called THERE (i.e. in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life) by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. [Light of Nations, par 31.] Each of these principles, of course, requires substantial elaboration but a proper understanding of them will move us beyond the churchified and clericalised pattern which has characterised our past.

Honesty and care for others. That everyone is respected equally for their beauty as a creation of God regardless of their social or cultural standing. That the Bible readings which highlight the role of women as deacons and holy people in the old and new testaments are read on Sundays so that the women in the congregation can identify with their own kind. Women's lives today incorporate work inside and outside the home and family. God is asking us to support all women by showing them how holy women juggled their duties in the past. God is asking us to stop reifying the male body in sport as heroes of human life and show men how to care for others and be good fathers and sons and husbands.

I, personally, feel that God is asking us to "get real"!—we need to get away from this fear and damnation mindset we have been brainwashed into and understand that God is a loving, peaceful entity

To reflect by the manner in which we live our lives that we are Christians. That we are honest, kind, respectful genuine people of God.

That is a difficult question as I cannot communicate with God directly. Other people that feel and are more in touch with God such as clergy, religious and potential saints. They probably have a much better understanding and sympathy with God's wishes. I can only base my feelings on readings from the Bible, instruction by clergy and religious during my time at school and other reading on the lives of saints that I have read since school. From that I can deduce that he wants us to follow the commandments and live a good life. It appears that those that have power and influence in society are only interested in following the particular commandments that suit them and ignore the rest. I think God is perhaps asking us that we should attempt to change their mind about this, not an easy task. Based on the readings from the Bible it would appear that God is perhaps sad about people not following the commandments and attending to religious. However I feel God is merciful and hopes that people will change and live according to his will.

Dear Madam/Sir, What I would like to Church to become is this: TO BE CREATIVE. To be creative in

- In Liturgy. I would want it to be stressed that a Liturgy Committee is obligatory, that if not this meets every week to organise the liturgy, that it meet for feast days. That the homily be part of the discussion as well, that resources be bought to stimulate creativity. My experience in the parish I attend is that liturgy is done strictly by the book. On Good Friday, the adoration of the cross took an hour. I don't consider that good liturgy.
- In Ministry. That it be encouraged to train people in ministry, real ministry besides cleaning the church or washing the linen, belonging to St Vincent de Paul Society or the Legion of Mary, being a catechist. All very important. Ministry

should be spoken of in terms that there are many ways of 'going out'. And training for various ministries needs to be part of the parish agenda. • Governance: Parish councils need to be obligatory and the priest not having absolute veto without an explanation to the other councillors. Finance councillors need to have a say and not be just a rubber stamp on what the priest has already organised before the meeting. Parish Councillors need to have a retreat or prayer day/s together to talk about where the ministry of the parish needs to put resources. The parish atmosphere needs to be one of delegation not absolute control by the leader/priest. • Education for the whole of the parish needs to be put into the budget, inviting lectures of not one persuasion (ultra conservative). The parish mission does not suffice. People need to be given the opportunity to learn about scripture, theology, working in social justice projects, that God is present in the people of God, in everyday situations as well as 'being a prisoner in the tabernacle, that prayer is wider than the rosary. • Community of God's People needs to be emphasised as being crucial and the ordained are part of the community. Status holding should be discouraged. Thank you for this opportunity, [-].

I think God is asking us, in Australia at this time, to be more open and accepting of all in our community. I feel God is asking our youth to become more involved in their local parishes. I feel God is asking us to concentrate on prayer and its importance in our daily lives. He is asking us to come back to a more traditional Church and be accepting of what it is asking us as practicing Catholics.

How can we invigorate the Catholic Church of Australia (and in our own area) to encourage people and families to be more involved in the Church community? As a Church, are we truly living the Gospel values and are we supporting and helping our fellow people? What is being done, what more can be done? How can we make our Masses more inclusive and more community based rather than directed by the clergy? Why are many of our new priests leaning so far to the right and moving away from the Gospel values with their Fire and Brimstone approach to the pulpit? I think God is asking us to stand up and fight for the type of Church we want.

I'm not sure what God is asking for the rest of Australia but in our diocese, he is asking us to return to Christianity. The word of Christ and his teachings. The parish priest here has taken a massive step backward into the dogma of the Church (pre Vatican II) and making that its priority. He has lost so many people that I know of. They have left the Church. He has responded by saying "I would rather QUALITY than quantity".

I believe that God is asking us to return to traditional ways. Our society is gripped and engulfed by sin, from within and outside the Holy Catholic Church. The abandonment of traditional ways has left a void wherein sinful behaviour has taken root. Young children now are exposed to vile content, using smart devices given to them by unfaithful and irresponsible parents. Families are embracing Protestant values and practices, and questioning the authority of the Church. Young people are falling farther from God than ever before because they do not know how or what to believe in a world that makes us think that all the answers are at our fingertips. How is God NOT calling us to return to the Church? To reject blasphemous changes and return to tradition, to a time before socialism absorbed society and, it seems, the Catholic Church. Our society is so

focused on pleasing itself that it has forgotten the sacrifice necessary for salvation—the very sacrifice upon which our society was built.
To preach/teach the gospels un- watered down!! To reclaim our Catholic schools—and teach the catechism in full—the Bible in full—not the Bible of “nice”—and that all religions are the same—to do His will! To stop covering up abuse! To stop liturgical abuse!
To be more connected and engaging with their local communities, i.e., participate in local events and cultural groups, assist with the homeless and give pastoral support to those in need, don't wait for them to come to the parish door, instead, be aware of those in need and offer assistance for a better Christian community, support the establishment of a bill of rights in Australia and advocate for human rights at all times. Stand up to unfair victimization of people.
To find a way to be compassionate, generous and bringers of hope to the wider community. We are being asked to do this through small acts of kindness, remaining non-judgmental and inclusive members of the wider community, not just those from our parishes. God is asking us to find ways to bring all individuals into the fold, by using inclusive language and attitudes, not making any judgement about lifestyle choices and loving each person as a child of God. This includes celebrating those of different faith traditions, cultural groups, LGBTI community and the divorced. God is asking us to accept all individuals as they are, not force them to change to meet our ideals.
To form life giving communities centred around the person of Jesus. I believe God is longing to fulfil his dream for us.
We believe that God is asking us to accept all people regardless of denomination, sexuality, socioeconomic status and age.
To be inclusive and to be a beacon for society.
Equality—Everyone having the right to express their views. Respect—To respect ourselves, others and property. Love for all—Showing kindness and the Christian values.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following Missionary Discipleship - Being kind, caring, considerate, and helping EVERYONE in and outside the Church. - Teach and following the values of Jesus.
To be accepting and welcoming to all, particularly the marginalized in the Church and to give to others; to create a just world.
God is asking us to show more acceptance and tolerance towards others.
To be accepting and welcoming to all, particularly the marginalized in the Church; and to give to others and to create a just world.
God is asking us to change our ways and to accept people of all shapes, sizes, cultures. Regardless of culture, sexual preference, if you're divorced, had children before marriage etc., ALL should be welcomed and accepted. Jesus did not discriminate, why do we? He accepted the lepers, the poor the needy, he turned no one away, why do we? priests show inconsistent rules and beliefs within our Church, people are confused and frustrated.

To be kinder, more accepting and tolerant of each other, other religions and all cultures. To open the Church to those who need it most.
To be a community, to talk to others about our faith, to bring our faith alive.
To be accepting and welcoming to all, particularly the marginalised, in the Church and to give to other to create a just world.
<p>* Work towards creating equity for all</p> <p>* Reflect and ask questions about our materialism—what are we seeking? What does spirituality mean today? Look deeply into the gospel message and live it Be tolerant and accepting of all—just as Jesus was. What is at the heart of being truly human?</p>
We are asked to be Missionary Disciples to do God's mission as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. To encourage and lead young families, by example, to the Church. To model a Catholic life in our families, school and communities. To pray often.
Return of those Baptised to be involved in liturgies and weekend Mass. Come together in a Christian community to support each other and pray together e.g. family groups. More emphasis on developing relationships with God through personal prayer. Support and healing to those affected by child abuse.
<p>To openly accept and embrace ALL as they are. * Consistency/unity of priests and their approach to accepting all people. * Bring the Church to the people of today. To become more inclusive and welcoming through understanding the complexities of the modern world. * There is an issue of receiving communion for Catholics only. *Liturgies to become more interactive. *Inclusion of different view point *Revision of man-made rules. *More women in the decision-making process. Acknowledge the past wrongdoings, be courageous and share our thoughts and stories. Inclusion in a Church for ALL. *Frustration when talking with older generations. *Big divide in beliefs (gay marriage, Church attendance). *There are other ways of connecting with the Church—rather than just attending a building, we can go elsewhere for learning and worship. *Our own experiences and perspectives are always changing.</p>
I think God is asking Australians to be honest and compassionate, to respect each other, as well as our environment. God wants us to assist refugees, not ignore them. God wants us to respect the right to life. He also would like us to be non-judgemental.
Ensure all people have the opportunity to hear the good news and know about God's saving grace. To know that our lives have purpose and that God gave his son to die for us so that we may not perish but have everlasting life.
To be kinder to each other and to look after one another as a community.
To be missionary disciples by helping each other, doing kind things for people less fortunate and being a good role model for younger generations.
To be progressive and encourage young people to engage with the Catholic community.
I think God is asking us to use our gifts to spread compassion and understanding to those around us esp. those in need.

To simply live his message of love, tolerance and respect. He had no other rules. His Church would model his love and change with the times.
We are asked to be compassionate and considerate of others. We are asked to recognize and accept difference and diversity. We are asked to promote and ensure peace and prosperity for all.
God is asking those involved in the Church hierarchy to engage more with a broader cross section of society. There needs to be less focus on limitations of dogmatic teaching and more focus on the life giving message of Jesus.
Be relevant, more connection with communities and people. The Church is a little delayed in integrating technology with services. Making it more engaging and user-friendly.
To love each other, no matter the religion, sexuality, background.
God is asking us to respect every individual, no matter where they come from. God is asking us to look at human as human not like a machine.
Further connection with a broader community of people whether at home in Australia or abroad. Catering to a younger and more dynamic audience and more collaboration with other faithful Christians.
Stand for Christian teaching in context of secularism. Strive for tolerance and assimilation. Value the Judeo-Christian ethic. Have open dialogue in Church. All a bit of a balancing act as many see these things as somewhat contradictory and mutually exclusive.
God is asking us to "love one another, as I have loved you".
I think God is asking us to give in the manner that we can
God is asking us, as a Christian community, to be welcoming and inclusive. We need to ensure that our services and celebrations become more relevant and inclusive of all members within the community. I believe that priests should have the opportunity to marry and be part of the community in a way that is more authentic and personable. It is crucial that change occurs in order to instil a renewed passion into the Church.
How can God be made relevant to the youth of Australia today? (There seems to be a lack of connection/interest or involvement with the Church).
Try to connect to our youth, we need to make Jesus more relevant in their lives, they are the ones who struggle with their faith the most.
To be more inclusive of everyone and be less judgmental. To love everyone unconditionally. To be more transparent and open up, fling open the doors for everyone. Make people welcome and just love.
Open, inclusive and without judgement and discrimination. Appeal to the modern world. Open the Church doors to all.
To be a light in the way forward in a modern world. It is difficult to return to previous generations where the Church was well visited. In view of this it is our duty to instil a sense of God and righteousness in the world, and especially the younger generations. We need to move away from

<p>a selfish world to a selfless world. It should be the role of the Church and those who are its ambassadors to lead this movement by example, teachings and reflection.</p>
<p>God is asking us to spread his word, but the way in which we spread his way has diversified and in a less traditional way. God is asking us for the spread of peace and in our ever-changing world is challenging. The traditional roles of the Church are changing and the faith community is having a much larger role in spreading God's message.</p>
<p>Be relevant, more connection with people in the modern world. Make the Church more engaging and user friendly. Adapted to the real life world we live in.</p>
<p>Live out the teachings of testament evident in the New Testament—loving, compassionate, forgiving, inclusive.</p>
<p>For people to make a difference they need to be in right relation with others. To know God is to know others. In moving forward I would suggest female clergy and the ability for priests to get married.</p>
<p>Social Justice: * A social justice group needs to be an imperative in each parish. Parishioners need to be appointed to take care of the needy—not just left to the St Vincent de Paul Society. * The parish needs to be aware of different culture within the Church and the local community. The Church community needs to find ways of celebrating with the different cultures, not expecting these people to just adapt to Australian culture. * Our Church and the local parish needs to be encouraged to stand up for Law and Justice for vulnerable people, particularly in view of the Royal Commission, exposing crimes by once respected institutions. *Social Justice issues need to include local, national and international concerns. One concern we have in [-] is the exploitation of migrant workers and backpackers. The rent they are asked to pay for overcrowded accommodation is scandalous.</p>
<p>I think God is asking for us to grow more deeply in our love of Christ and our knowledge of the faith. The Second Vatican Council called for Catholics to grow in our knowledge of the faith but this has not been heeded. Very few Catholics have more than an elementary or high school understanding of the faith. As such, they are left with a conception of the Church and its teachings that seem no more sophisticated than when they left school, and these people are completely ignorant of the rich intellectual depth of our faith. Our participation at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass needs to become more reverent and reflect the profound spirit of adoration which should fill our lives. Too many Catholics have an easy-going approach to the Divine Liturgy but if the Mass is truly the eternal sacrifice of Christ offered for us then no effort should be spared to hold ourselves to a high standard and render to God worship which is due to his most sovereign majesty. Catholics need to take the faith far more seriously and recognise that God takes priority above everything else. A practical way is to encourage more time for silent prayers before and after Mass and to encourage families to become more orthodox in their practise of the faith. In particular, we need more holy days of obligation such as the feast of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), altar rails for use during communion, a greater respect for priests as men who are ontologically conformed to Christ Himself. We need more days of fasting and penance and priests need to be told to make these known to their congregations. priests also need to encourage the use of sacramentals, the knowledge of which has declined over the last few decades. I think God is</p>

asking Catholics in Australia at this time to seek perfection. We need to be seeking virtue and the heights of sanctity, to be utterly conformed to Christ in our thoughts, words and actions. Catholics need to live a deeply ascetical life that does not fear or shirk from suffering but embraces it wholeheartedly for love of God.

What is God asking of the Church in Australia today, especially in the area of clericalism. • The ordained must stop seeing themselves as members of an exalted and elitist club that protects the interests and privileges of its members. • This has to also stop being taught as a matter of fact in our seminaries, especially the Wagga one. • Seminary training should take place in a far more open setting. Seminarians should live in the community, go to their lectures and have part time jobs to support themselves, like most university students. They must be kept immersed “in the world” so that they are realistic in their understanding and appreciation of the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the parishioners they will be ministering to. • The leadership of the Church (the bishops) must start emphasising and teaching that the Church must see itself as “a pilgrim People of God, incarnate in the world. It is a new paradigm—one that is based on mutuality not exclusion, love not fear, service not clericalism, engagement with the world not flight from or hostility against it, incarnate grace not dualism. It is the Church going out of itself as opposed to closing in on itself.” (Bishop Vincent Long) • Clergy must concentrate on their pastoral ministry, the spreading of the love of God through the joy of the gospel. • The laity must be given far more say in the administrative running of parishes and dioceses, in line with their baptismal dignity and responsibilities as set out in Vatican 2. • The ability of a newly appointed priest or bishop to throw out everything he doesn’t like must be ended. • Women have to be given far greater recognition, responsibility and leadership in decision making of Church and Bishop Commissions. • The whole process of appointing priests and bishops needs to be thrown open and allow genuine lay participation and input into the decisions. The system used by the Anglicans would be a great starting point. • Titles must be used appropriately. Titles like My Lord, Your eminence etc. are not needed. Nor is the demand to address every priest as Father. • Female deacons would make an enormous difference to the culture of the institutional Church and would be a great step along the way to female clergy.

My concern is for people in the Catholic Church who have remarried after a divorce. They do not want to have their first marriage annulled as they have children they still love and would not insult them by doing this. Yet they do not feel they can receive Communion at Mass which they attend. Please give some thought to the very many people who find themselves in this situation.

I think God is asking us to go back to basics. Very few people understand what the Catholic Church stands for, and WHY it stands for it. No one prays anymore and no one knows why they should pray. We need all people to pray daily if we want things to improve. No one goes to confession because everything is someone else's fault. Everyone thinks they are "good" but don't know whose standards they are defining good by... We need to teach the simple truths behind why we should do things that are so important. Everyone wants to be happy but has forgotten happiness is the result of doing what we ought to do... Not what we feel like doing. We need to educate students and parishioners the basic truths of why God must exist. Short Thomas Aquinas proofs. We need to encourage daily prayer. Reading of Catholic books. Give them away, Catholic mp3s, pamphlets, put up billboards at schools and churches with simple messages, saint quotes or short

Bible quotes that make people think about their life and where they're heading. Stop tip toeing around difficult topics like gay marriage or abortion. Call them out for what they are and explain why. God is absolute truth. Nothing can be built on a lie. God is absolute love, you cannot love without truth. No one can find God's love without prayer. Until we get on top of the lack of prayer in our communities it's not going to matter what we do. Prayer will bring people back to Church. Encourage them to pray and they will seek God.

I think God is asking us to return to the basics. The Church needs to address the lack of understanding of most lay people of what Catholics believe and why we believe it. People need to know the truth about our faith, not what they think is the truth heard from the media and uneducated sources. Most of us are now uneducated in our faith and so are unable to pass on the truth and beauty of what the Church truly stands for. We do not need to change any Church laws or soften our stance on the difficult issues just to fit in with current social trends and demands.

To be more inclusive and welcoming to the whole of the community. Women, Divorced, Youth, LGBTQ, ex priests and religious are isolated and not treated as equal full members of our Catholic Church.

I believe God is calling us to an inclusive Catholic Church that all baptised members are recognised and involved where appropriate in the life and decision making structure of the local and national Church community. 1. The model of Church needs to change from hierarchical to an inclusive circular interactive model and clergy need to be re-educated in the area of social sciences e.g. psychology, sociology, communication skills. 2. Formation of laity for leadership in the life of parishes and dioceses is essential. 3. A new orders of ministry to be established: 'Ministry of the Word' for parish gatherings without a priest, 'Ministry of Pastoral Care' for hospital visitation, 'Ministry of Faith' for faith education of adults, 'Ministry of the Youth', etc. Laity would have formal training for these roles and be "called and sent" officially by the local faith community for a specific task or time. 4. Formation and ordination of women and men as deacons and women priests. 5. Parish structure to be reviewed:- No longer hierarchical with the priest at the top but a 'Parish Team' and the priest/deacon are part of the Team. -Involvement of laity in the management of the parish at all levels of decision making. -Parishes led by women and men deacons where there is no priest. -Small rural churches within a parish be led in Sunday celebrations by a 'Minister of the Word' to enable the local community to continue to meet and support each other. -The above groups form local 'Parish Teams' teams to make decisions about the life and worship of their local community and liaise with the local parish priest. 6. The Australian Church has to be realistic about finances and in some way recognise that they cannot continue to depend on volunteers e.g. catechists or religious women and men. Laity called to Ministry need to be employed. 7. The Australian Church has not had a tradition of offering Adult Faith Education including the social sciences at tertiary level to the laity especially outside the capital cities. We need an educated and informed Catholic Culture for the laity in Scripture, Theology, Church History, Philosophy, Social Justice, etc. 8. This could lead to developing an Australian Christian Spirituality centred in the Scriptures, Prayer and Life Experience with on-going opportunities for people to write, offer retreats, spiritual direction etc. 9. The Australian Church has to make an enormous effort to engage with young adults 18-35 years. The use of technology

is their familiar and preferred way of communicating. It is the 'new' Church of the 21st Century. How do we offer the 'Word of God and Hope' to this younger generation?

To maintain our faith and beliefs. To uphold our Christian teachings.

Go back and restore the churches and altars to the beauty and wonder as they should be and get rid of all this modern rubbish. Restore the Mass and the churches to their former glory. Give to God the Glory and Reverence that he deserves, return to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and traditional values. Stop weakening, softening, reducing and diminishing our beautiful historical traditional music, buildings, clergy into a boring, stone cold, laughing stock. Some are 100 percent Protestant or some other variety and can't even be recognised as Catholic. The crosses are removed, the tabernacles are places in any old corner of the room, while the altar is crowded with any amount of people at one time giving communion any old way they see fit. People dropping particles of Jesus' body and precious blood on the floor, or even worse dunking or stirring their host into the precious blood like they are making soup and bread or tea and biscuits. Stop the clapping, singing and dancing and chatting. Call the priests to preach the truth on hell and purgatory, we don't want to be lied to. It is not a popularity contest with crowd pleasers at their helm. Young people and any people want to hear the truths as it has always been, not airy fairy stories that the modern priests like to tell to gain popularity and charm. We want to hear Gregorian Chant and traditional hymns, they have totally ruined the music all together it's pathetic. Give parishes to the traditional Mass communities. Most of the people in the new Mass will have nearly died out in the next 20 years anyway. Make the Catholic schools Catholic or remove the name Catholic from them. They are full of teachers who themselves have no faith and rarely attend Mass, and if the overhead screens fail they don't have a clue what to do. How can they pass on faith that they don't have any to begin with? Meanwhile the traditional children have to be home-schooled as there are scarcely any schools suitable for faith to survive in. Give parishes to traditional communities so we don't have to share a parish and get treated like intruders or refugees. Remove all the Protestant habits from the Church for good, restore the Church to how it was before it tried to fit in and be trendy with the world and failed. The modern Mass is inferior cheap and nasty rubbish, remove all the TV screens. Restore our Church to its former Glory for the future generations. Daily Holy Masses widely available, that would be the optimum. Please get us out of this awful mess and start again.

There is a skewed interpretation of the theological virtue of Charity in the post-conciliar Church. Marxist Ideology prevails in the Western world and is subverting the faithful. It is a cancer that has been infecting the Church for decades. We are living in an age of relativism and subjectivism where God, the Author of Truth and the Source of our very being is not known throughout the land. We are called to know, to love and to serve God and to be with him for all eternity. God wills the salvation of man. He gives us sanctifying grace in order that we might save our souls. He does so through the Sacraments of the Church, through the consecrated hands of the priest. St. Augustine says that no man may find salvation except in the Catholic Church. God says, "Thou shalt have no false gods before me." Christ says: "Thou art Peter, upon this rock I will build my Church." And again he says, "He who will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen and the publican." It is a dogma of our faith that there is positively no salvation outside the Roman Church, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. So why, as of the birth of abominable

doctrines such as “religious liberty” and “ecumenism,” has this fundamental dogma suddenly become wrong? We have lost a true notion of the virtue of charity. Charity is no longer principally about the care of souls but rather an “I’m okay, you’re okay,” attitude of indifferentism. There prevails in our modern world a purely material understanding of this virtue. “On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets: ‘Thou shalt love God above all things and thy neighbour as thyself.’” (Matt. XXIII. 37) We have become entranced with finding the remedies to our manifold societal woes, through purely social means. In other words, we neglect the true Remedy in favour of ourselves. We’re looking for the solutions in the wrong place. Christ the King is the builder of societies. Let us place Him once again on the summit of our altars and in the centre of sanctuaries. Let us offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass according to the Roman Rite of the Council of Trent, where there is strictly no place for ambiguity and novelty. Let us keep Christ in the hands of the priest as per St. Thomas Aquinas’ teaching. Let us put the child back in the pew and place the priest back on the pulpit. Let us again preach on the justice of Almighty God and the necessity of repentance and the conversion of sinners. Let us pray the Leonide prayers at the conclusion of the Mass for the liberty and exaltation of Holy Mother Church. Let us boldly condemn the least heresy and be willing to die for the Truth which God has revealed and teaches through His Holy Church. Let us punish justly all corruption and sin. Let us do penance. Let us know again as far as we are able the gravity of sin. Let us abandon the folly of modernism, which Pope St Pius X rightly defined as the synthesis of all heresy. God wants the Church to be Catholic again.

To show more reverence for God's house and respect for others who want to pray when preparing for Holy Mass and at the conclusion of Holy Mass. Jesus chased the rowdy money changers out of His house and this is what our Churches in Australia sound like—it is as if this is a meeting place to share all the gossip of the previous week. We were brought up to do the chatting outside and pray silently when in Church.

I believe God is asking us to Love—to love all who we encounter. We have to love them in the ways God called us to love him. Not change things and make everything wish washy. We need to be taught our faith and why our faith is based on the foundations that have been laid.

God is asking the Australian Church to be inclusive in every way including, gender, age, race and sexuality.

We think God is asking that women need to be acknowledged in our Church and that their involvement at senior levels of Church management be given credibility. Generic language used in the Church must be inclusive—not just “men”. Altar servers can be female. This has become quite an issue in some of our parishes with priests only wanting males. Women make up the majority of the congregation in our local churches but many times are told they can clean the church, be sacristans, sing in choirs etc. but are refused roles in management or other ministries. With the emphasis on the male domination in roles in the Church, the gifts and talents that women bring to the Church are being ignored—to the detriment of the Church. Women need to be heard and heeded in seminaries as well as in all ministries, especially when dealing with divorce, separation and re-marriage.

God is asking us as a Church to be welcoming. We should welcome all. Our Church has become very judgmental—divorcees, gay people, separated people, those who do yoga, and so on it goes... so many people are spoken out against as being cut off from God. It is not our place to judge. It is our place to reach out. The Catholic Church really needs to get back to Jesus' message of love and caring for others. God is asking us to look into the training of our priests. This needs to be greatly revised. We have priests coming out of the seminary with very interesting theology and attitudes often which predate Vatican II. Rituals, traditions and ideas that are being reintroduced into the liturgy and parishes are from 60 years ago. It is quite disturbing as it is seen as more authentically Catholic than modern traditions. God is asking that the Church listen to all people and so I would expect that in the delegates at the Plenary Council will be representatives of divorced, separated, gay and other marginalised groups so everyone's voices can be heard. God is asking that finances in parishes are transparent to all parishioners. Finance committees, chosen by the people with a few appointees by the priest, should exist in all parishes. A financial report which is clear and transparent should be available to all every year, listing all income and expenditure for the parish. God is asking that women be acknowledged in the Church and their talents and gift be utilised. It is a male dominated Church—even female altar servers are being phased out now in many of our parishes "as altar serving is the first step to priesthood"! Women have many gift and talents they can offer the management, pastoral and organisational areas of the Church. For too long, there have only been token gestures. It is time for the Church to take a serious look at what women have to offer. God is asking that the Church looks at how it trains priests to work with children. It seems priest come out of our seminary with no experience of liturgy with children and expect them to participate and respond to adult liturgies. They often seem confused and bewildered when children do not respond or fail to become animated. The priest often wants to change something only a few hours before the Mass or liturgy or even just as Mass is about to begin, and cannot understand why the teacher is reluctant to do so. This shows absolutely no knowledge of young students at all. Teachers are expected to train and keep up to date in Religious Education and be familiar with the Church's teaching especially the Directory of Masses with Children, yet we have priest who have no knowledge of it at all.

To be tolerant and live and act as he did giving from the heart.

Subsidiarity should be practiced across the whole of the Australian Catholic Church / community. The Vatican needs to be at the service of the whole Church; the diocese at the service of the parish and the parish at the service of the local community. Bishops need to be pastoral, smelling of the sheep and laity should have serious input into the type of person the diocese needs. Liturgy
Ø Different / better local inculturation required. Ø Community working together so that liturgy is meaningful to that community. Ø Better understanding of how schools work with the community to develop liturgical practice. Ø Liturgy committees in each parish and diocese who communicate. Ø Much more adult education—we develop and change in our personal/ relational/ professional lives—why aren't we encouraged to develop in our faith. Ø Each individual needs to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own and the community faith journey. Ø Recognition of the different groups in the Australian Catholic community; we are a multicultural and multi faith society living in uneasy community with the First Nation people. This is worked out in families, communities, and needs to be addressed in parishes and dioceses. Ø Recognition and

<p>understanding of the variety of complementary spiritualities within Australian Catholic spirituality. Ø Within liturgical practice better use of inclusive language and more recognition and use of the more vernacular language used by many in Australia. Ø Knowledge of what can and cannot be done within the rubric and the reasons why. Ø Knowledge and use of existing, though unused and generally unknown, prayers and readings e.g. more use of the Third Rite in Reconciliation; Eucharistic prayers, Eucharistic services. Ø Listen to the many and varied voices of women and give them equal and meaningful roles within liturgical practice. Ø Don't impose conformity from the top down. Clericalism Ø The nature and role of priesthood needs to be understood, explored by everyone. Ø Once baptised we are all priest, prophet and king / queen, at the service of humankind. Ø The ordained, male, clerical priesthood of the Australian Roman Catholic model needs to be examined carefully for fitness of purpose. Ø What does a parish need? Ø What does society need? Ø Should there be different types of priesthood models depending on the setting? Ø Should celibacy always be demanded? Ø Should priests always be male? The person putting themselves forward for this priesthood needs: Ø To be recommended by their local community. Ø Needs to show they are mature, seeking discernment of the Spirit in their life, aware of what it is they are putting themselves forward for. Ø Have finished high school and lived away from family for a couple of years. Ø Experienced ordinary employment. Ø Come from all walks of life, classes, ethnicities, across the age spectrum, both genders, have explored their own sexuality and accepted it openly.</p>
<p>To live the gospel values in our current context. In essence to be inclusive, to show love and compassion to all in our communities. To come together as a community to celebrate the Eucharist and then to go out into the community and make a difference. To actually see the face of Jesus in everyone we meet and to ensure that our interactions allow others to see the face of Jesus in us.</p>
<p>We need to make changes that are life-giving for all in our Church, especially those on the fringes, the young and the disenchanted and those who have been hurt by clergy and those in power.</p>
<p>God is asking us to base our life and the practice of our faith on the Beatitudes as demonstrated by Christ in the Gospels not to follow rigid rules e.g. the precepts of the Catholic Church. Implementation of recommendations from Vatican II</p>
<p>1. The Church in Australia was mainly built on the trust, voluntary work and donations given to each parish and the abuse which some priests have done to children and others makes one feel ashamed, but I think that recompense and apology should be given to the abused and that we should add to the prayers of the faithful prayers that this should never happen again. Also abuse should be treated as a police matter if there is evidence of an offence the priest or religious should be excommunicated. 2. There should be included in the prayers of the faithful each Sunday prayers to pray for the persecuted Church in the world and to be in unity with our brothers and sisters who are suffering from persecution for their faith. 3. Need to pray more through Mary our Blessed Mother for the faithful to grow strong in their faith. 4. More Churches to have Eucharistic adoration to pray for the needs in their parishes. 5. The Catholic schools do not seem to be having an effect on the children to be strong with knowledge of their faith. This I believe should be addressed. 6. Organisations like St Vincent de Paul should be called that and not shortened to Vinnies (I do not support Vinnies anymore since they changed their name). 7. The good works of</p>

Catholic organisations should be published so the faithful know what they do. 8. Education for the faithful in their faith should be ongoing e.g. pamphlets at the back of the Church about different Church teachings. Lessons from the Catechism brought to the attention of the people, e.g. a lesson at a time spoken of during Mass or similar. 9. Eucharistic adoration chapels or adoration in Church at regular times for people to pray for and adore Jesus 10. Regular healing Masses in each parish (monthly or bimonthly) for people to come and pray for themselves or their loved ones who need healing prayers. It doesn't need to be complicated or a Sunday Mass. A weekday Mass would be okay allowing people to come up and be anointed and a priest lay hand on their head. 11. Prayer should be emphasised more and also to explain to people "how do we pray", what do we do and how to pray effectively. 12. It should be said time and time again to married couples to pray to the sacrament of marriage together and regularly to help their marriage. I remember a priest said to me to pray to the sacrament of marriage when my marriage was in difficulty because the sacrament had power and I did. I had no idea the sacrament had power to help. 13. Pray for vocations in every parish over and over again.

God is asking us not to abandon Him because we need Him more than ever. We have such a high standard of living in Australia and society is so focused on the individual that we think we can manage without God. We also have more ways to communicate without being present to the person we are communicating with. However, I think Australia's high level of mental illness is the result of abandoning God and allowing e-communications to destroy our interpersonal relationships when we rely solely on them. We can't do everything ourselves and destroy ourselves by trying. We need to accept God as a loving Father who has a plan for us and has our best interests at heart.

It's time for a change and listen to the youth

I think God is asking us to be faithful and to offer support to the people around us. I think we are being asked to pray more and attend Mass each week.

Not too sure at times. I have trouble working it out because different priests teach different things. E.g. some are very old school fire and brimstone which makes you think getting to heaven is going to be very hard, and other teach more about the love and compassion of God which makes you think you have more of a chance and because you think God loves you unconditionally you are more likely to strive harder to please Him. I find this very difficult because I was brought up in a convent which really was all fear and not love. I wish all could be on the same page. Also some priests refuse communion to divorcees and others and yet others will say all are welcome to the table of the Lord. Very confusing.

To be compassionate, inclusive, empathetic living members of a community that supports each other within society. They need to be active members of society, not existing in some aside, outside of everyday secular life. Need to be welcoming and accepting of everyone in the wider community, not to be concerned about the way they look. It is asking us to be present and unknown individuals that participate in everyday lives of those around us, not hiding behind collars and habits to set us apart. God is asking us to be personified examples of the concepts of faith, hope, peace and joy—bringing a message of joyful hope to the world.

To be inclusive of all people, take down the barriers, to support asylum seekers and include women as significant people in His Church. Married men committed to Catholicism need to have significant supportive roles within the Eucharist.

To listen to the Holy Spirit, for guidance in changes to the way we see our Church, for the coming generations, so we can be an inclusive community.

I believe that God is asking the same thing of us as He always has. The message hasn't changed. A few of the details might be different, but I think that, in general, we should continue the mission to proclaim the Gospel, to grow in Holiness (in cooperation with the Grace of God), and to continue to Worship God through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Sacraments need to be available in as many places and in as many times as possible. The Church needs to continue to serve each other, in Charity and Truth, not pandering to the whims of society, but by being bold in sticking to the Truth and representing True Justice. We must stop hiding unpleasant topics because souls are languishing in purgatory without many to assist them, people are afflicted on earth because deliverance from the demonic is not sought or offered, babies are potentially being denied eternal salvation because we are too indifferent to abortion and society keeps making laws of enslavement because we don't pray properly, or with true trust, to our loving Father in Heaven. God is still calling His bishops to lead us to Him with courage, and is still calling us laity to follow them with humility. He is still calling us all to unite our sufferings with those of the Lord, just as saint Paul taught us. He is still calling us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit properly identified (through spiritual direction or otherwise), as opposed to the fleeting emotions and selfish desires so often attributed Him. All of the saints were humble. We in the Church are called to be saints, but we must first humble ourselves, surrender to God, and be Humble. Perhaps God is calling our priests to better teach this to us in this time of turmoil, self-promotion, and relativism. God has given us a Heavenly Mother. He is still asking us to behold Her. I would call for the bishops of Australia to consecrate this nation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (again?) to reunite all Catholics under Her Maternal Mantle, and, to cooperate with Her in Her Mission of leading souls to Her Son.

I think God is asking us Australians to be open to change, look after each other no matter where people come from. Welcome change. Except that society has changed very quickly. We need to recognise that many marriages are and have failed, however these people are still welcome in the Church. God did not judge people, he did not look down on them. He is all giving, all loving and forgiving.

I think God is asking us to be open and to ask questions about the changes we would like to see to enable the Catholic Church to have relevance for all parishioners for the future to make sure we have a strong and relevant Church for the times we are living in.

The needs of the Church laity include 1. Close the seminary in Wagga Wagga as it is turning out priests trained in the style of pre-Vatican II such that they are appointed to parishes and refuse to engage the parishioners and hold court on their own as a dictator would. 2. Eliminate the Opus Dei from all influence in the Church to allow it to flourish as Jesus would have it do. Their influence is abhorrent to say the least. 3. Accept the fact that not all people are perfect and that some wonderful people have had to endure a divorce, and whilst it takes two to tango many of

the "victims" are still great personalities and wonderfully accepted people. Allow them full communion as who is the Church or a bishop to judge them as being unworthy of inclusion in the Church. You bishops need to get off you pedestals and be with the people. Remember Luke 6:37.... Also when Pope Francis was asked about the inclusion of gay persons into the Church he said "Who am I to judge them...."
To be understanding of the other. To fill his Churches with people who can deliver his message and get confused about who they are. e.g. not God.
To understand properly what it means to be Catholic and to be "lights" and "leaven" in society—not retracting into small "cliques" which "practising" Catholic parishes have become. This starts with the problem of the "practising" Church today being concentrated into small "cliques" that do not integrate with the wider community, while the "non-practising" Catholics (Catholic school families) become estranged from the wider Catholic community. I think the problem of this duality stems from the way that Catholic Schools are organised. I attended 3 Catholic schools throughout my life and I can count on the fingers of one hand how many of my fellow students practised their Faith and now continue to practise. I now practise in a parish ([-] near [-]) where one of these "practising cliques" is making the parish priest more authoritarian and the parishioners more peculiar—having less in common with the wider [-] community.
I think God is asking us to look at responding to people's spiritual needs by being more adaptable and responsive and welcoming.
To be the best people we can be.
It is a desperate attempt to re-establish the message of God and Jesus. I guess he wants us to revisit our values and how we carry out those values.
It is a Church that allows co-responsibility among the priests, religious and lay faithful especially in matters of ministry with families, elderly, youth, and children. Participation of the laity should not be suppressed but supported by priests, religious and lay faithful trained for this purpose. Laity need to be formed and educated to allow priests to be their team leaders as such, allowing themselves to be formed under their care but also helping other adults to minister to them. There should be greater care to foster adults who can also minister to other adults and together with the priests, help form the lay faithful according to the heart of Christ Jesus, who is Shepherd, leader and Lord.
Everyone to get back to church.
For understanding and care for each other, no discrimination remembering to keep in mind that the most important Commandment is to Love.
God as the creator of all, through Jesus, has taught us how to live in this world. Because of the people in the Church hierarchy down through the ages Jesus message has been lost. The Church is meant to be a community of people. Therefore we should all find love and acceptance in this community. This is not always the case. If one is a practicing Catholic the Church is a loving place. If a child brought up in the faith, then finds their own way in the world and no longer practices their faith as they were taught, then occasionally returns to Church why are they not welcomed by the clergy but instead made to feel outsiders. Therefore they question is it necessary to be of

this community that is judgemental, or is it more important to live exemplary lives raising families with good moral values. Will they be condemned because they no longer practice the faith they were taught, or will they be judged on the kind of life they lived. In our modern world what is the answer? Why are so many of our young people turning away from the Church? We should be focusing more on the love of God for all mankind.

To make the Church more relevant in a changing world this is becoming ever more relevant in light of the current commission into abuse involving priests all the way to the top.

He is asking us to be patient and forgiving. He wants us to lead by example particularly to the young adults in their 30s to 50s. We need to make Mass fun and inclusive to attract young people. Try as I may I cannot engage my sons and daughter or nephews or their spouses. Most of them were educated in Catholic schools and have received the sacraments. They do not seem to even worry about baptising their young let alone educating them in a faith. I find this disturbing as the next generation will not be able to make the same rational choices that they have. I only reckon that God works in funny ways and this has happened before. Maybe our education has turned us away.

God is against the foster care system in Australia. It is a kids for cash scheme and a state sponsored paedophile ring. Children have their lives destroyed and families are torn apart. For the most part children are taken only because the statutory definition of RISK is far too wide. Worldwide people are complaining about this demonic system that destroys families and gives children to homosexuals and transgender people. LA County alone has lost 600 children in their care. LOST! Studies show 88% of all children in USA trafficked for sex come from the foster care industry. This is a worldwide demonic system and the Church has no business being in this business. Children are dying and being raped in this system under the cloak of secrecy and suppression laws. The Church MUST end its association with the demon-based system.

God must feel like drowning us all again. He is surely asking all of us to come back to the ORIGINAL Church before the Princes of the Church became so powerful.

When we look at the world we see the greatest attacks of the devil are on family, and traditions of the Church. I feel the Lord would have us in Australia address these very issues, give greater support to (especially Catholic) organisations supporting family and that are pro-life. I also feel to combat the attack on tradition in the Church, we should go back to stricter practices, to encourage growth in the Church for those that truly love our Lord and Lady, and to drive out the chaff.

Evangelisation: Catholic parishes could invite non-Catholics to a social event, say in a parish hall with the parish priest and willing parishioners attending. The event could be called something like "What are Catholics about?" The priest and one or two parishioners could give introductory short talks, and the rest of the time could just be for socialising with a cuppa and parishioners talking to the non-Catholics about their faith. Reverence: Parishes could have a program for parishioners about the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and the reverence due to Him. Prayer: Parishes could have programs about Christian Meditation e.g. Lectio Divina. Leadership: Bishops could follow the lead of Bishop [-] and be involved in pro-life work for example, or be publicly

vocal about things like the flimsy evidence that led to Cardinal Pell's imprisonment. Catholic laity would join their ranks to repel social injustices.

God is asking us for:

- An evolving model of Church with a vision that is inclusive.
- To remember and practice our common baptismal anointing as priest Prophet and King / Queen
- A Church that listens and discerns the voice of the Spirit.
- An ordained priesthood that is fit for purpose

It is time for everyone in the Australian Church:

- To be co responsible at all levels.
- To enter into meaningful relationship with each individual, with dignity and respect.
- To throw open the doors and be welcoming to everyone.

Remembering the following:

- The giftedness of all.
- Communication is vital.
- Tradition means handing on and growing—a tree continues to grow after planting.
- We are all one and need to have a common Vision.
- Our Social responsibility—integration through music, sport, etc. especially reaching out to and including the young in all that we do.

We are a group of young adults ranging in age from 18-27 who meet weekly to learn more about our Catholic faith and to discuss issues surrounding our faith and everyday lives. As a group we have discussed what we would define as areas of attention for the upcoming plenary council. The main areas of concern are that of education, particularly Catholic education, Church liturgy and the Church within society.

The same as He always asks of us: to submit to the Kingship of His Son in our hearts, through the grace of His Sacraments, as given to us through His Church, so that we can faithfully do the work he has given us, whatever that is, in our daily life. Thereby growing deeper in love and communion with Him over the course of our lives, and being made whole and holy.

God is asking us to be more humble and grateful; To be more accepting of each other; To have faith in the Church; Be patient till the people who make the decisions in this country work it out God is asking us to live our life in a good way and treat everybody equally—not JUST think that going to a building every Sunday is all that God wants. Australians to be just—bring the children off Nauru and out of detention, welcome refugees and asylum seekers not to look for certainty but believe.

What do you think God is asking of the Church in Australia at this time? • The Church needs to be more inclusive just like Jesus was. • The Church needs to be more accepting of others (e.g. divorce, LGBTQI, lapsed Catholics). • The Church needs to interact more with the poor and the

<p>marginalised (like Jesus did). • The Church needs to reach out and adapt to the needs of young people. • The Church needs to adopt adult education faith formation programs. • The Church needs to be a listening Church and less judgemental. • The Church should consider revisiting aspects of the old Mass translation or develop a completely new translation. • The Church should become less hierarchical and be focused on togetherness with God. • The Church needs to support the priests to continue to be our shepherd. • Each parish needs to engage with technology to spread their message. • The Church should empower the lay people (including women) to take on leadership roles in the parish. • The Church should consider reintroducing the third Rite of Reconciliation.</p>
<p>Focus on the teaching of Jesus. Include more women in the hierarchy re decision making. Consider having deacons both male and female. Allowing priests choice to remain celibate.</p>
<p>To listen and discern the signs of the times. To take notice of where we have swayed from Jesus' message and to be prayerful people who listen to each other. God is asking us to be faith filled people who show his love and message to all—no matter if they are gay, or atheist, or sinners. I think that God is asking us to 'let go' of a moralistic and legalistic way of doing things in our practices and to be more inclusive. I think God is asking us to be outgoing in answering those in need.</p>
<p>I believe that God is asking us to be as bold as the first apostles, to go out and re-Christianise our neighbours in an ever more hostile social environment. In order to be prepared for this we need to be well formed in the faith, especially the youth, and the help of the sacraments. Whilst much of this comes down to family life and the direction of parents, I believe that a more solemn and respectful liturgy would help immensely, as the youth are simply not interested in sing-song hymns and lovey dovey sermons. They need hard truths that challenge them and that they can respect, otherwise they will stop going to Church the moment they are out of their parents' care (I am speaking from experience).</p>
<p>I am feeling very unsure if the Catholic Church is listening to the people. The recent scandals of sexual abuse, the continued power base within financial management and the lack of ownership, fellowship and community has made me question the Catholic Church in Australia. Our communities need and want spiritually sound leaders yet my experience sees many Church and institutional (diocesan) leaders as very patriarchal with little relevance to the lives of the communities to which they belong. We now have genuinely faith filled priests from other cultures who do not have any real understanding of the communities they serve. It feels like any man in a black frock will meet the needs of a community when clearly they are ill prepared for their role. This is not a criticism of the priest simply a mismatched pastor in communities. They are good people with limited understanding of our cultures and education.</p>
<p>To return to basic Christian values and beliefs. There is too much emphasis on clericalism. The People of God have to be listened to. Too much power in the hands of too few.</p>
<p>I believe God is asking us to open ourselves to Renewal across the Church through the Bishops, priests/Religious, and Laity. Firstly I believe this can be achieved by all bishops and priests/religious who have not previously taken part in a Life in the Spirit Program, to be strongly urged to do so. It is only through being touched by the love of Jesus through the Holy Spirit that</p>

each priest will then understand and be led by the Spirit to encourage all their parishioners to also partake in a Life in the Spirit Program. Secondly All Seminaries should have a Life in the Spirit Program in the first year of formation for each of their students. Thirdly the Church overall has never taught Catholics how to evangelise. This can be achieved by holding Alpha courses in all parishes. Once attending Mass goers have experienced alpha, they will then be equipped with the confidence and tools to share the Gospel with others. There is a large Catholic culture to not talk about religion with work colleagues, at sport, shopping etc. Alpha would give us the Spirit of courage and wisdom to become more familiar with our faith and Religion and Church to then share that with others. Once the current Mass goers have completed Alpha, we can aim the course in our Catholic schools where most families don't attend Mass regularly. If we can invite these fringe Catholics to Alpha God will do the rest in his time and plan as to whether the people will then return to the Sacraments. But the Purpose of Alpha is not to put people on seats in Church again, but to give people a personal encounter with God and begin a relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe seminaries need to have Lay educators for priest formation also and not just priest/Religious educators. As a number of my acquaintance' have degrees in Theology, (such as one lady who is a Psychologist also, and a wife and mother and formerly a Religious herself). The lay educators in seminaries would also be able to testify their life experiences to the students who could often be very "unworldly" or lacking in life experiences. Perhaps until Lay educators can be found, lay people with testimonies could be invited into seminaries to share their life story, particularly if it is that of conversion. New and upcoming priests need to know how to minister to the unChurched and not just the Catholic community. As the Church is in crisis we need to be open to more ecumenicalism and be inviting to our local surrounding Christian Churches for united Liturgies and gatherings/events. The Catholic Church can learn a lot from all of the other Christian denominations as they could learn from us. For I believe it is through this open invitation, learning and becoming familiar with us that a lot of Christians will begin to understand and feel drawn to the true Church and come home. Especially since the protest is over and reconciled in the late 1990's in the joint documents signed between the Lutheran and Catholic Churches.

We are being asked to create connections with each other, create community for others. Create spaces for silence, spaces for worship and ritual in our lives.

God is asking us to journey together with open hearts. We are to be honest, transparent, inclusive and to see Christ in those coming towards us. We need to welcome and not to push away or judge. We need to engage rituals that include all cultures and peoples.

For the opportunity of everlasting life by following Jesus's teaching. He would like us to be more dutiful to The Catholic Church and its teachings. Pray for Mary, Jesus and all the Saints that have sacrificed their lives to spread the word of God. He would wish us to also contribute in spreading our faith of the Lord to all that we meet.

We believe the Holy Spirit is calling for an intense renewal in the lives of the faithful and that this will begin with improved formation of the faithful. To adapt real estate parlance, it is all about formation, formation, formation. Proper formation allows us to come to know who Christ is and to hear his voice. It invites us to an encounter with Christ and helps us to hear what he is calling us to. In this spirit, we humbly suggest the following ideas for improving the formation: • Greater

access to and promotion of Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, Lectio Divina and Confession alongside regular Mass attendance in all parishes across Australia. • Greater proclamation and instruction on the basics of the faith in sermons and catechetical activities, with an emphasis on the truth, goodness and beauty of our faith and how adhering to it leads to joy. • Universal provision of access to the Augustine Institute’s Formed platform across all parishes and dioceses—it provides unprecedented access to video based study programs, feature films, audio presentations and eBooks from acclaimed presenters for Catholics of all ages. • Support for ministries that proclaim the orthodox teachings of the Church, such as those outlined in the response to question 2. • Improved formation for those preparing for the sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation, which conveys to the recipients the visible rites, what they signify and the graces that are received through these sacraments. • More extensive formation for people accessing sacraments of Marriage, for parents bringing their children for Baptism, and those seeking Catholic burial. • Improved programs of formation for lay Catholic adults in the areas of marriage and family, the universal call to holiness, living and proclaiming our faith in the public square. • A reconsideration of the mission of Catholic education in Australia, particularly when the majority of students and a large proportion of teachers are either non-Catholic or do not attend Mass each Sunday. The primary mission of Catholic education needs to be to proclaim the truth of who Jesus is, and the teachings of the Church he instituted. This needs to permeate all aspects of teaching, curricula and the broader operations of the schools. Faith cannot be a bolt-on, added extra, or confined to a quaint 30 minute session a week. We cannot afford for these institutions to contradict, or be hostile to, the teachings of Jesus and his Church.

I think God is asking us to be accepting and inclusive.

- Gay marriages should be celebrated in the Catholic Faith in the same way straight marriages are—priests should be allowed to marry and have children. Why can a practicing Catholic be allowed to marry and still love God, yet clergy-people must only love God?

- Women should be able to join the clergy as priests. As Catholics, we celebrate Mary’s role in Jesus’ life. Why are women not equipped to be priests?

To look at the seminary situation and the sacramental program.

To accept gays in the Church, women priests, and zero tolerance towards paedophilic clergy. Simple.

God is asking us to look at the gospel and make it relevant in Australia today. Jesus never backed down on any issues but still showed tenderness and mercy to everyone. He is asking us to stand up for our faith and live it so that people are inspired to ask what makes us different but special too.

- Be more accepting of others and honest with each other.

- Be kind to everyone, regardless of their gender, race, skin colour, sexual preference, beliefs etc.

- Don't abuse the privileges you have been given.

- Create a peaceful community—be at peace with yourself and others.

- Honesty in confessing sins and committing to not sinning again.

- Try to attend Mass as often as we can to share our faith in community with others.
- Share resources and wealth with those less fortunate.
- Show equity to those who need it, such as the poor.
- Give more, without the expectation of reward or benefit.

I think that God would want more silence and respect shown to his son Jesus when waiting to celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass. It is sometimes distressing when trying to become silent and still and ready to participate in the Mass to have loud and at times raucous conversation taking place inside the Church.

To find a way to be more inclusive of all people no matter their status in life or their sexual preferences or their sins—without appearing wishy washy or going softly softly. It's the Catholic Church and rules and standards apply but we need to at the very least be welcoming and find ways to include all to the degree that they can be included, re: gay marriage—it seems to me that there may be a message here. The homosexual community campaigned and received the right to marry while more and more heterosexual couple are choosing not to marry. Love comes from God—I don't know the answer but have seen strong lasting love that did not look any more deranged or flawed between same sex couples than between heterosexual couples. Maybe we are being told how important marriage and love is even though the messengers may not be who we expected.

To be heard/listened to, to be seen, to be believed, to be valued and to be loved. The Church should not be concerned with its won so called glory or status but to ensure that all people are safe within the Church.

To reform the Church. To dismantle the mountain of hierarchy, and come back to the simple teachings of Christ.

To have a total rethink on how the Catholic Church treats minority and marginalised groups as well as those who may be judged as "fallen" Catholics.

1. That the Church is a welcoming, non-judgmental place, inclusive and embracing of all (e.g. divorcees, LGBTQI, those who have used IVF, the disenfranchised...) so that no one is burdened by guilt. 2. We are the Church. 3. The priest is often the face of the Church. We recommend that the parish priest: a. is present, e.g. visits the parish school and its students. b. is relevant in his message. c. really listens to the needs of others. d. remembers that relationships are two way. e. is like Jesus, not just following and trying to enforce a set of rules. 4. What we want—a Church where clergy treat children with respect so that the male teachers in Catholic schools are not accused of "being just like those priests" because they are a male teacher working in the Catholic Church.

I think that God is asking the Church in Australia to be a source of hope and truth for the whole of Australia. I think that He asks us to be examples (or witnesses) to others of the happiness which can only be found in the Catholic Church and living by Her teachings. Ultimately, we need to show by our lives that we are enjoying true happiness, joy and peace of mind because we have a strong friendship with Jesus Christ (the Author of Creation) and His Church. We need to avoid the false

extreme of pharisaic behaviour (for example, appearing to follow all the “rules” on the surface, but secretly engaging in morally evil behaviour). As Jesus put it (and most ordinary people can understand), a person’s moral character is shown by his fruits (his behaviour), and not by what he says. We also need to avoid the other false extreme of using God’s love as an excuse for refusing to follow Jesus’, God’s or the Church’s laws (instead of viewing those laws as helping us to live lives of love). We need to better explain to people how the Church’s teachings are not opposed to true science (since true science cannot be contrary to God’s creation). We also need to make Jesus better known, and his love for each human person. We need to be courageous in defending and promoting the teachings of the Church as a sign of our love for God and others (even if it means having to go to jail). We also need to follow the teachings of Pope Francis in being compassionate to others and devoting more of our time, efforts and money in helping the poor and those in need to show our love for our fellow Man.

God is asking us to reform the Church so that the clerical, institutional Church aligns more fully with the lay pastoral Church of the faithful who are living the message of Jesus Christ in various ways. Education, health care, aged care, charities and the like, in the Catholic context, are champions for change and are striving to make the lives of those they walk alongside, better. These pastoral activities, which reflect the Corporal Works of Mercy, as set out in Matthew 25, involve the faithful working together to co-create the Reign of God on earth. However, only half of the faithful are represented or have a real voice in the decision making process of the Catholic Church due to the exclusiveness of the priesthood. Therefore the Church needs to be open to accepting that the priesthood must change. Including married or celibate priests, both male and female, whether they make a lifetime or shorter term commitment, could be one option. Also, decision making in the Church, needs to include and reflect more fully the people of God, including women who make up more than 50% of those faithful to the message of Jesus. It is time to embrace the spirit of the teachings of Jesus, to devolve power and to move forward with a vision which is inclusive, grounded in selfless, agape love and is nourished and poured out to others so that "all may have life to the full" (John 10:10).

To be faithful to our baptismal calling to go and make disciples of all nations. To let the world know God loves them and has a plan for them. Not to be intimidated or silenced or scared because some of our brothers and sisters in the faith have failed, but to be courageous that God is the victor and is the only one who can bring good out of evil.

To have better catechism classes. Most people that go to Mass on Sundays do not even know what the Church teaches. More Adoration, people need to have access to worship our Lord in the Eucharist.

That the meaning and the history of the Mass be explained in all parishes through discussions, homilies and publications. That parts of the Mass be made available to children to participate either through song, drama or liturgical reading. That priests may marry if they so choose. That 3rd rite reconciliation becomes more popular. That small country parishes be monitored by the closest big central church to ensure that the parish priest is carrying out his duties effectively. That parish and financial councils be mandatory and have power to direct decisions appropriate to the congregation. That the parish priest becomes a more everyday person, mixes in the community, knows the enterprises and interests of the townspeople. That contraception within marriage be

allowed. That overseas candidates for priesthood once trained go back to their homeland where they are desperately needed. That the Church fosters a feeling of belonging by acknowledging and welcoming Newcomers. That social functions be used to give people the opportunity to meet others like themselves in a relaxed atmosphere. That the Mass group get together for a cup of tea after Mass at least every 3 months. And at that Gathering any communal problem be discussed. That the older people of town be not forgotten. More and more will be living at home alone. Look to their needs and join groups within the community who arrange transport, gardening etc. Acknowledge their worth and thank them for sacrifices and work done in their younger days. That as a group we become more ecumenical and celebrate our common values with other Christian religions and that we socialise together more. Thank you for the opportunity to express my ideas. Sent from my iPad

To learn true Catholic prayer and traditional liturgy because it's necessary that as Catholics we are not worldlings seeking after pleasures, status and respect but humble servants devoted to Our Lord, living in Holy fear of our salvation and holy love for God and people.

Please follow the way of Jesus more closely. Please be more attentive to the Holy Spirit and less constrained by fear of authority and law. Please do away with all the gold, lace, brocade and silly hats: be clothed in humility and the Spirit. Church authorities should speak less and act more. One kind action is worth a thousand words. Welcome, forgive, rejoice. Don't blame the secular world for the mistakes you've made. I love the world. Vatican II was a genuine work of the Spirit. Get on with it. Stop blocking the way, forming cliques, controlling power. I am scandalised by your 'good' intentions. Learn from the Aboriginal peoples and the refugees. Wash their feet. Please go out to the young people. There is goodness in their culture. The Catechism is right when it says the Marian dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine dimension: I ask for more equality, less hierarchy; more service, less worship; more prayerful openness to the Spirit, less fear of Roman bureaucrats; more poverty, less elitism. Those who continue the struggle will find me with them. Those who rest on their laurels have their reward already.

To be a prophetic Church. To stand up and be counted.

To keep the faith. Catholics are under the microscope and many are unused to the level of vitriol in the community due to the historical child abuse.

I think it is time to restore the Holy Latin Mass in more parishes and put it on an equal playing field with the Novus Ordo Mass. This means making more parishes devoted to this form of the Mass and giving proper pastoral care to these communities. They have very large families and need the support of a strong spiritual father, rather than giving them a priest for only 2 hours a week. One or two full time priests with these communities would reap very strong rewards for the Church of Australia in both vocations and future strong marriages. I know many, many families who desire this in the Church of Australia.

I think God is asking us to strive always to live as He has asked to live, following Him as guided by the Church which is His Body - the Body of Christ. Jesus taught very clearly about faith, hope and love, and emphasized that the greatest of these virtues is love. Jesus has guided His Church through the power of the Holy Spirit and has created us to spread His Gospel throughout our sphere of influence. But in particular we need the hierarchy of His Church to tell us clearly and

regularly how His teaching is asking us to live, and to work tirelessly to spread this teaching to those who have never heard it.

To be faithful to Liturgy. That Liturgy is faithful, valid and licit led by the priest in which ever of the various rites. Opportunities for deep prayer in Mass. A profound lack of education exists toward liturgy and worship and needs to be addressed. As an Instructional Designer for online learning, trained in both Primary and Secondary Teacher and working at university as well as National Marketing Manager for the previous two years, currently back in the classroom, there are strategies that can be really well designed for engagement and online learning that can be delivered as solely online, or a combination of both online and face to face that could be utilized that delivers content to individual wants that can be facilitated by a parish representative(s) with or without the parish priest depending on time and availability of the parish priest. I spent two years helping convert 284 face to face courses to online as well as teach the different schools within one faculty how to construct educational video. There are already some USA examples and TV platforms. I know there is one originating from [-] for Catholic content. There is no need to reinvent the wheel but to utilize resources and programs that are working and helping parishes build up their evangelization skills like ReBuilt for example.

The two key words that come to my mind are 'fidelity' and 'formation'. It was a lack of fidelity and a lack of formation that got the Church in Australia into the mess we are in: only fidelity and formation will get us out of it. It seems to me that this would include:

- * Re-consecration/entrustment of the entire nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Mary Help of Christians could be re-proclaimed as the nation's patron.
- * Repentance from sin—in all its forms, which first requires a humble examination of conscience.
- * Doing God's will in our lives.
- * Prayer—regular and deep prayer according to the long tradition of the Church. The renewal of the Rosary.
- * Scripture—use of the Revised Version Second Catholic Edition (RSVCE-2) for the Lectionary.
- * Liturgy—Our Churches need to be open during the day; a sense of the sacred must be regained; reception of Holy Communion on the tongue; kneeling to receive Holy Communion; the use of approved sacred music in the liturgy.
- * A return to the proper observance of the Lord's Day.
- * Confessionals with a full and fixed grille between priest and penitent - This would seem to be a 'no-brainer' in the wake of the recent Royal Commission.
- * Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
- * Speeding up bishop appointments.
- * Parish priests given longer appointments.
- * A Review the Holy Days of Obligation for Australia.
- * Publishing an approved Divine Office app.

- * Catechesis at all stages of life.
- * Solid Religious Education Syllabuses in Catholic and Public Schools—Comparative religions study in High School could be dropped and RE for public school students done outside of school hours.
- * Profession of Faith & Oath of Fidelity for all teachers of religion.
- * A Review of Sacramental Programs—it would seem that parish-based rather than school-based programs are working the best for children. A consistent national approach to things such as:
 - the order and timing of the reception of 1st Confession, 1st Holy Communion and Confirmation.
 - basic minimum standards for receiving a Sacrament, such as Sunday Mass attendance.
- * Marriage Preparation and Ongoing Marriage Formation.
- * Penance—A return to the Friday penance of not eating meat as an obligation.
- * We certainly need a lot of love—agape—to overcome disunity and to be the disciples of Christ that we are meant to be.
- * Almsgiving—a revival of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
- * Pastoral formation in the use of technology.
- * Formation, formation, formation—all the members of the Church in Australia need to become engaged in ongoing formation, from cradle to grave.
- * An Implementation Commission—an established body for the implementation of the plenary council in Australia.
- * Regular scheduling of Plenary Councils every 10 years. These points are further elaborated in a document I will upload at the end of this submission.

As the facilitator for [-] Catholic College [-], I volunteered for the position because I believed that we are all being asked to play a role in this process and this was mine. I believed that I may be able to offer my gifts in facilitating the voice of the youth. I started off simply trying to tick this task off quickly and complete it in a creative art piece in which I could control the output to some extent. The artwork proved to be a tip of an iceberg and I came to the realisation that God simply asking us to listen and stop trying to plan ours and others' responses to what we think others want to hear. This experience has shown me how easy it is for us to stop listening and demonstrate that stereotypical 'we know best' attitude. God is asking us to change, grow and be fully alive in our faith journey. In order to do this we must shed the deadwood from our branches but listen to the environment in which we are trying to grow! The youth are our future and my full submission and attached documents of my College community will clearly demonstrate that they are willing to tell us how we can make them feel that they are being heard and belong in our faith. It is clear through this exercise that they are screaming at us, with what they are not saying. So God has given us an opportunity, an ark in the form of a plenary council, a chance to rebirth our faith in today's society. He is asking us to breathe life back into a religion and to lay a stone on the pathway of trust and redemption in its followers. God is asking us how we can continue to pass on our traditions, not cemented in the mistakes of the past but alive and living.

To spread the joy of the gospel... to be filled with the Holy Spirit and spread the good news of God's Kingdom, especially to the poor and marginalised. To walk ever closer to Him, particularly through Sacrament and scripture. For everyone to have a renewed faith, to have a real hope in the Lord Jesus, to be one with our brothers and sisters in Christ, to walk in humility with them, as the first Christians did, as outlined in the Acts of the Apostles. To not be judgemental of others, to boldly proclaim what we believe, and witnessing through leading good Christian lives, as taught and witnessed by Jesus.

God is asking us to return to Christ, to listen to his voice, to make his voice the guiding principle in our lives. In my experience, the majority of Catholics, including the majority who go to Mass each Sunday, do not listen to the voice of Christ when it comes to making moral decisions in their lives. When faced with a moral issue, they are more likely to listen to the world than to seek the voice of Christ and to follow the Gospel. Most Catholics are woefully ignorant of their faith, and don't appreciate the richness that it holds. People think that the Church is one of the wealthiest organisations in the world. In a sense, they are right. The Church has the wealth of the teachings of Christ and the overflowing abundance of God's grace. If they would turn up at church, they could have as much of this wealth as they could carry away with them. Last night I watched Q and A on the ABC. They were discussing the case of Cardinal Pell. A Jewish Rabbi spoke eloquently about the meaning of life and the need to recognise each person as an end in themselves, and not treat people as a means to an end. I thought I was listening to a Pope! What he said sounded very Catholic to me. The strange thing was the other panellists, who had been attacking and denigrating the Catholic Church all night, were overwhelmed and heaped praise on him for the wisdom of his words. But when the Catholic Church says the same words, they ignore them. Obviously, the Church has much to offer the world; the world does not understand how much it needs the wisdom of Christ. We are living in a post-Christian era, as evidenced by the laws that parliaments have passed in the last few years: laws that permit abortion up to birth, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, etc. Even many Catholics have supported these laws. We need to re-evangelise the faithful.

We are being challenged by the secular world to come into line with a secular world view. I believe that God is asking us to do what he has always asked, to practice detachment and follow him. We are being challenged to be less rigid in our faith which I believe will be a mistake. Church scholars have always maintained we are all at a different place with our faith but we should strive to grow in faith. By being less rigid how do we challenge our faith to grow, to learn, to decrease to self that he may increase in us. God is asking his Church what he has always asked. To teach his people, do not be afraid to teach the truth. The immediate challenge to the Church is in relation to clericalism. Another left leaning term to demonise the Church for teaching its people. Some say the Church has lost its relevance. If the Church stops teaching its people then it will truly be irrelevant. The idea of forming one's own conscience is ridiculous if our leaders don't preach the precepts of the Church. The biggest threat to our faith is pride and if our clerics are silenced in challenging the pride mankind who will. Please start teaching the faith again. Teach the catechism in Catholic high schools. Do not allow individual parishes and schools to write their own catechism. Teach the Church's catechism, and if you want to condense it use the compendium. Teach apologetics so young Catholics know how to defend their faith. Teach history of the Church

and all forms of the Mass as acceptable. I am not a Latin Mass goer but do see the value in unifying the Church by teaching all forms as acceptable. The Church offers so many ways to praise God by there is a definite split in the Latin Mass vs Novus Ordo. Teach the real presence. Bring back public processions. Get involved in political commentary so the faithful may be informed and represented. If politicians are misrepresenting the faith then make them accountable. Above all the people need instruction on the faith, the sacraments and the divinity of God.

This submission is made on behalf of our family: Father, Mother, and 7 children aged 6 to 24 years. We have prayed about, reflected on and discussed the questions being asked by the Plenary Council. We think God is asking for Unity in the Catholic Church, as brothers and sisters in Christ faithfully adhering to Christ's teaching in Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the teaching authority of the Magisterium.

We respectfully submit that:

* the Plenary Council does not accept any submissions that contradict the teachings of the Church articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We deeply love the Church and Her Teachings. Sadly, there are people who do not understand the Church's position on many issues. This does not mean that the Church needs to change to fit in with society but rather that the Church needs provide better faith formation so people fully understand the beautiful, life-giving teachings of the Church and can confidently defend the Faith and pass it on to others.

We submit that:

* more needs to be done to ensure that faithful Catholics know their Faith so well that they can truly know, love and serve God, and can live, share and defend the Faith.

* those responsible for Catholic formation should receive continuing solid formation in the Faith and pass it on in its entirety, not watered down.

* the Church's traditional position on marriage, contraceptives, abortion, euthanasia, IVF and divorce should remain clear and uncompromising.

* the sacred Seal of Confession should be protected and defended.

* freedom of speech of Catholic morality should be defended and exercised regularly.

* Catholic schools and universities should retain freedom to teach Catholic doctrine and hire those who give a consistent example of Catholic life.

* freedom of religion should be properly protected by secular governments.

* educate parents and their children in the fullness of the Faith, so it can be passed on through the generations in its entirety rather than trying to accommodate secular opinion.

* encourage people to evangelize without reserve so that we can bring others to the Truth and fullness of the Faith.

* with regard to reception of the Blessed Sacrament, clearly explain and uphold the Church's teachings of the nature of the Real Presence and the meaning and nature of being in a state of Grace Catholic Liturgy represents the pinnacle of Catholic expression of faith and worship of God.

For this reason we submit that at all churches:

- * altar rails be present.
- * the tabernacle be the focal point.
- * Daily Mass be readily available.
- * there be frequent and regular Confession, Adoration, Benediction and Holy Rosary.
- * modest dress and respectful behaviour be encouraged in all churches.
- * have priests who are well trained, give sound, solid homilies, wear priestly garments, remain completely dedicated to God through celibacy, and no female priests.

God is asking us to consecrate Australia to Our Lady Our Heavenly Mother, to consecrate our dioceses and parishes to Her Immaculate Heart. To pray for sinners, to pray for priests and bishops, to pray for the faithful so they will lead holy lives. She and only She can guide us through these times. Do this straightaway, there is no time to waste.

I think that God is asking of us to love Him and Jesus and Mary and to love each other. I think that Our Lady came on several occasions to ask for prayer, repentance and turning back to God by living good lives and praying the rosary for conversion of sinners. Is the Church in Australia focusing on this? The rosary has so many miracles and conversions attributed to it and I believe all parishes in Australia should promote the rosary and actively say it every day in Church and promote it in the homes.

I think God is asking us to say the Rosary and or the Divine Mercy Chaplet after each Mass, for people to return to loving Jesus and appreciating that he suffered for us and wants us to be His friend.

To stop, review, renew/change/evolve. Continue the listening and discernment process. To show that love, with compassion and mercy, is the fundamental basis of our Church. The two commandments of Love and the Beatitudes should be the principle guiding influences for all in the Church—love for all God’s creation: humanity and nature. We should be guided by Vatican II and Pope Francis’s messages, especially those in *The Joy of the Gospel* and *Laudato Si’*. The Church should be welcoming, reaching out to the marginalized—the poor, homeless, disadvantaged, those discriminated at all levels of society. There should be much more emphasis on positive, love filled actions and much less emphasis on what not to do and fear of breaking the law. To be a truly Catholic Church—of/according to the whole—from Latin/Greek roots; and also meaning: universal, diverse, indiscriminate, ecumenical, open minded, tolerant. To me, this means welcoming ALL—not excluding and not thinking only Catholics are the ‘chosen ones’; and open to discussion and change, allowing diversity. Embrace the notion of *sensus fidei/fidelium*: sense of the faith/faithful to establish a broad consensus within the life of the Church, enabling the whole Church to be a discerning body. The dominance of the teaching authority of the Church has marginalised the majority of ‘the faithful’. To be relevant to our time. This will require a review of:

- current structures and governance—sharing leadership across the *sensus fidei*, acknowledging the depth of skill and educational qualifications (in scripture, theology, etc.) within the laity and using those skills effectively;
- the role of priest and training practices, including entrance criteria, a common curriculum, greatly improved communication skills and understanding of, and obvious empathy, with life in the ‘real’ world, including culture and the place of women. Also acknowledge the decreasing numbers of priests and discuss ways to manage this including roles for the laity;
- the wording of our liturgies—to be written more simply, in current English and clearly understood, still conveying current theological thought. There is still a place for formality and tradition. There are very big issues to be considered. There is a lack of confidence in the Church hierarchy and people are saddened, disillusioned, some feeling betrayed and many walking away. They have not lost their faith but will explore their own spirituality. The Plenary Council must acknowledge the current state of the Church in Australia—in all its forms. Then work to heal the brokenness, acknowledging and supporting those who are willing to work to establish a renewed life-filled, loving Church.

The frequency of prayer and access to Adoration—the veneration of Christ in the Eucharist is key for the shaping and the future of the Church. Penance—without the offering of sacrifices, souls are surely lost. The encouragement and availability of confession. Authentic Catechesis—not taught by those lacking in faith, ignorant and unaware of the doctrines and teachings of true Catholicism as well as the liturgical calendar. Of all the above, this is the most important: pure reverence of the Mass. Why is God worshiped with liturgy preferred by the congregation and not by that of which he deserves? The sacrifice of the Mass should be full of truth and beauty. Bring back the liturgy and glory used and practiced by popes and saints afore. Return the language of the Church, as well as Gregorian chant. Restore the solemnity, and reverence that used to be. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is done for God, not as a performance for us. Give us Masses worthy enough to glorify God; Masses inspiring; Masses that we can identify from true Catholicism and not confused as a Presbyterian service; Masses that will make us saints; Masses that will incite men to want heaven.

To be faithful to Jesus Christ, to cling to Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life, to be faithful disciples who treat the deposit of faith as a divine gift instead of a merely human invention that we can manipulate. God wants us to avoid making up a new gospel.

Jesus said, "when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8). God wishes His Church to have faith. There are many in the Church who in all honesty do not believe the words of the creed, who do not believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead such that his body did not undergo decay. They are playing games.

God always calls us to know, worship and love him and we should continue to do this through prayer and the sacraments. He wants us to continue to be faithful to Him and to the teaching he gives us through Christ, His Church and the teachings of the Magisterium.

I think God is asking us not to lose hope. If we do not have hope that our Church can move forward in this world then we have nothing.

God is asking us to be patient, look after each other and remember that the minority is not representative of the majority. This is a test of our faith.
God would want the Church to be welcoming of ALL people and to embrace their differences. This could be done by valuing women and what they have to offer so they are equal to men in the Church's eyes. The Church in its actions and interactions with others needs to be a model of Jesus. It needs to be REAL and not caught up in rules and rituals but instead open its eyes to the real world, get out into the community and interact with people just as Jesus would have done.
We think God is asking us to be more welcoming and accepting of others, while still following Jesus' teachings. We feel there is a need to break down the hierarchy of the Church system in order to bring the Church leaders closer to the community.
God is asking us to open up and be inclusive of all people, no matter of sexual orientation, marital status, gender, age, cultural background, previous life choices, religion, practicing or not practicing Catholic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To be supportive and speak up for the groups that the Church are not fully accepting e.g. LGBT community. * To acknowledge the equality and rights of women to fully participate in the Church, especially in leadership roles. * To allow priests, both men and women to be married and continue to minister in their communities. * The Church needs to accommodate the changes in society e.g. birth control, etc. * To encourage the Church to come back to the fundamental core lessons from Jesus, to love one another. Reduce the number of man-made rules that are not relevant to our faith in Christ. * To embrace the relevant rituals that help us to make our faith meaningful.
The modern world has embraced secularism as a rejection of Christian values. But Australia's identity has always been that of a secular nation built on Christian values. Our religious tolerance has been an example to the Old World, and we should continue to be a lamp for all to see. As Catholics we need to protect our institutions from the increasing hostility of the State. Painful though it may be, we must find ways to become independent of it. For example, instead of accepting State Aid for our schools, we should insist on a voucher system. In this way, a buffer would be created that would ensure more political power for Catholic schools. When parents vote with their feet, the State knows they are serious about faith education. Our Church leaders should look to overseas models for ideas on how to maintain the independence of our schools, hospitals and other services.
To listen to his word, frequent the sacraments and stand firm against errors.
The Mass—It would be beneficial if the Church could return to some of the traditions of the Mass in order to maintain the solemnity of the ceremony of Christ's death on the cross. For example, having more Gregorian chant or more traditional music. Some of the music (although nice for outside of Mass) is more for a Christian concert as opposed to the solemnity of the Mass.

Beautiful music helps to raise our hearts and minds to God. Incense—using incense as part of the Mass rituals as another way of showing the solemnity of the Mass. Ringing of the bell to signal Mass is also a way of witnessing. Encouraging priests to ring the outside bell is a way of reminding people that Mass is about to start. No women priests! Homily—we need to return to the truth. Priests need to use the homily to bravely teach the truths of the Church. We cannot water down what we believe in. The more we water it down, the less people will come to Mass. We seek the truth! Doctrinal formation outside of Mass could also be beneficial. Families—It would be helpful to have more courses for marriage and family to support families and marriages. Courses like the Family Enrichment Australia courses would be helpful in supporting families in their roles as first educators. Education—Encouraging good doctrinal formation in schools without watering down the truth. Many Catholics no longer trust Catholic schools to teach the truth. How can this change? How can we reignite our trust in schools to teach our children the Catholic faith? Praying in class. i.e. grace before meals, Angelus, morning offering.

God is asking us to go back to our traditional roots and not continue down the path of modernism and progressive extremism. We need to stop trying to change things within the Church unless it means reverting to how it once was before all of the problems arose after Vatican II. We need to stick with priests being celibate as it is a tradition going way back and not be forced to drive us further towards Protestantism with priests marrying, not only will there be financial burdens but more importantly they don't have the time to have a family and also serve God in the tight schedule and hard work load that they are given. If we are wondering why vocations aren't happening, look to why there are many in the traditionalist Catholic Churches that celebrate Latin Mass and why the Novus Ordo ones are struggling. We must not allow divorcees to receive Communion no matter what progressives in the Church say as it is a direct undermining of our faith. We must not bow to political correctness and accept the LGBT agenda as it is a mocking of our faith. We need to be more political and get the Church to once again have influence on society and become more powerful in the decision-making. We need to ensure Catholic Schools are teaching the faith just like they used to rather than pushing these matters aside and becoming no better than Public Schools. We need to ensure that every diocese in this country has a Latin Mass available as it promotes the traditional core of the faith and every parishioner should have that option to attend such a Mass, at the moment there are 3 dioceses that don't have it available, [-] being one of them and for one of the biggest cities in the country to not have one is a disgrace. We must go back to traditional hymns rather than turn into a charismatic Hillsong-style church, there are already those types of churches available and whilst some may think they are thriving they are not, because people come and go and don't stay on full term, it also undermines our faith in trying to be like them although we aren't. As a young person I reject guitars and all forms of modern worship and much prefer Gregorian chanting and traditional hymns. Church numbers started to decline when the modern reforms of Vatican II came about and it hasn't recovered since. If you are wondering why our numbers are down and vocations are down, that is the one event plus the further modernisation overtime that has made people lose the faith. We must be strong and adhere to all forms of tradition whether it be regarding liturgy, social views, etc. I also believe that the modern architecture of the newer Churches are a disgrace and look no different to modern Pentecostal halls. Also we need to get rid of gay priests as they have been the ones that have brought about the molestation issues. Sacred silence in Mass and modesty should

be enforced also. Bring back headscarfs and no female speakers, or altar servers. We need to start living our faith.

I believe God wants us to build upon the sweeping changes of Vatican II which were inspired by the Holy Spirit. In my experience, the Catholic Church of the 1970s and 1980s was dynamic and increasingly inclusive. We were finding common ground with Christians of other denominations and with non-Christians also. Yet in the decades after the eighties we backed away from the commitment to ongoing change demanded by Vatican II. At the same time, the Church has distanced itself from the drastic social, political, economic and interpersonal changes which have arisen globally from the internet and social media. As a result of these two trends the Church had lost all relevance and credibility, particularly with young people in minority world countries, even before the sexual abuse cover-ups were made public. Young people like my four children aged between 17 and 25 are concerned about social justice issues such as systemic gender inequity, racism and unjust treatment of refugees, and discrimination against people on the basis of sexual preference. God is asking the Church in Australia to learn from the mistakes of the past thirty years and to accept that Vatican II was, and is, the true way forward. God wants us to ask ourselves the question that's often too inconvenient to pose seriously, "What would Jesus do?" and then cut through all the hypocrisy and corruption just as he did, to make the world a better place.

Get rid of the homosexuals in the priesthood, ban Catholics from being freemasons again, bring back the Latin Mass, bring back tradition. Direct parishioners how to vote in elections and have influence again in society. Stop watering down the Church doctrine to please degenerates and enemies of the Church. Bring back headscarfs and sacred silence. No women leadership as the Bible forbids it.

I believe God earnestly desires that his Church becomes more unified with all the Christian denominations. As Jesus prayed before he left this earth: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one." - John 17:20

To PRAY MORE. What I would love to see is that Eucharistic Adoration is made available on a weekly or fortnightly basis (preferably weekly) to God's people in each parish throughout Australia, to pray for an increase in Vocations to the priesthood and Religious Life. To pray for individuals who are struggling to get off drugs and for the protection of the Unborn Babies in the womb.

To step up to the task of explaining why our faith is important to us, and to demonstrate by our actions.

Repent and believe the gospel. The Catholic Church is the bride of Christ. God has provided wonderfully for His bride. There is no shortage of true teaching, that his body (they shall be one body, what God has joined let no man tear apart) may be pure and spotless. God is asking the bishops to shepherd His Church according to His revealed will, The Sacred Deposit of the Faith. God is asking His bishops to recognise the predicament the decisions of their predecessors, and their own, have put us in. The publication of 'Humanae Vitae' marks a watershed. Some of the clergy, led by the bishops, decided to teach in contradiction to the fundamental premise that

"what God has joined together let no man put asunder". That is they taught that people were free to separate the procreative from the physical in the marriage act. This is contrary to what God has joined and taught throughout the centuries through His Church. Disobedience breeds disobedience. Now the vast majority of Catholics in Australia are not obedient to the Church. It seems that most Catholics do not know what The Catholic Church teaches about most things. Most Catholics are not faithful to the sacraments. God asks His bishops to Man up and regardless of who says what proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in season and out of season, right now! We the world of sinners are looking for the truth and seeking it. The Catholic Church has, is, and will be gifted with all the spiritual blessings necessary to build up the body of Christ. The bishops need to focus on their God-given work. The Church seems always to be in need of reform, not revolution. The leaders have by their decisions led the Church to where it is now. Two images seem appropriate. 1. The Church is being heavily pruned though it feels like being uprooted. 2. The boat that Jonah sought to escape the work God gave him. The crew jettisoned everything they could till their only purpose was to save themselves. Catholic people including clergy have sought to highlight the situation to the bishops. The bishops have in large part ignored them. Why is the Church so weak and under effective attack? The shepherds are given the authority. They have many willing followers. Please lead us to OUR FATHER in Heaven.

To love all people as equals, no matter of age, sex, race, gender, nationality etc. To see that each person matters, and to recognise the innate sense that we all have to look after each other. To treat one another with kindness and respect, empathy and tolerance.

Within us quench the flames of strife. The harmful heat of passion quell; Give health of body to our life and give true peace of soul as well. Hymn, Office of Readings. The Catholic, Universal Church should not be attempting to equate itself with contemporary Life in Australia. Its message wherever, in the world is love of God, love of oneself and love of thy neighbour. Love of God, apart from its implied meaning, also entails praise and worship of almighty God and to that end, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, initiated in the Holy Eucharist his real presence in a transubstantial way for us to deliver our love, worship and charity. From the Apostles, their ordained successors (bishops) and Church fathers from Justin Martyr onwards this remarkable and mysterious institution has been borne through generations of believers. Love of oneself, as distinct from boasting or promotion of oneself, is the way to full recognition of ones capabilities strengths and importantly, the grace to accept ones shortcomings all of which is aided by the great prayer of the Eucharist in the Mass. This love is a great contribution to the advance of society and civilisation. Love of thy neighbour then stems from the whole person committed to worship, prayer and charity. It is to the reaching out to our fellow community members to assist and develop a peaceful harmony. Jesus Christ's heavenly gift of his body and blood in the earthly gifts of bread and wine is the core of the Mass but it is being overlooked or forgotten in our worship; the description, transubstantiation has been dropped out of the vernacular since Vatican II! WHY? Then, with this diminution came the almost total collapse of the Sacrament of Confession. It seems that if the godliness and presence in the bread and wine is ignored then the holiness of the confessional is not appreciated; gone! This dreadful drift must cease. Our Apostolic Successors must raise the standard in their respective diocese and churches; they must fearlessly speak up in the homilies and even in the public domain speaking the truth. Don't be hidden by that

bureaucracy of the Bishops Conference of Australia. Use the Holy Spirit, forge forward and give good leadership to the priests, deacons and laity. Christ's message and teachings ruffled quite a few feathers and has resounded throughout the world ever since.

To bring people to Christ, not send them away. It is all about understanding and forgiveness, and acceptance.

To understand the role that the Church has in this 2019 with all the given problems.

I think God wants the Church and families to be faithful, and embrace the Church and its gifts—sacraments, prayer life and The Word. Maybe all the faithful need to be serious and increase or renew prayer, both personal and in the family. There are so many problems, troubles, and disasters (drought in Australia) which can only be solved by God and prayer. Imagine if every single Catholic in our country put prayer as a priority and made time for it (not just Sunday morning duty). How the blessings would flow. Without persistent prayer evil flourishes.

1. Regather and re-educate the flock. Too many of the sheep are poorly formed and do not know their faith. This is evident by the high number of poorly informed submissions to the Plenary Council that are either against the 10 Commandments, Church teaching and / or Church tradition. 2. Reaffirm that the 10 Commandments are not 10 suggestions. 3. Teach the Creed, we proclaim it each week, but how many actually understand it. 4. Re-affirm that the Catholic Church is the One True Faith and we do not MOVE with the times and go with what is popular. 5. Re-affirm why marriage is between a man and a woman and for it to be defined as a marriage it must have a conjugal definition. 6. Educate as to why LGBTQ lifestyles are offensive to God and any other gender other than male and female is scientifically inaccurate and is a mental illness. 7. Stop Church abuses such as using Extraordinary Ministers for very un-extraordinary reasons. 8. Encourage the flock to pray the Rosary and to take up a holy hour each week to pray for the Church, its priests and bishops and for the Holy Father's intentions. 9. Women wanting a more prominent place in the Church should be encouraged to prayer the Rosary, choose an hour each day to attend an Adoration Chapel or if single, join an order. Our Lord was very clear that Our Lady had a very special place in the Church, but not as an Apostle. 10. Return to appropriate music selections for all Masses and this should extend to weddings and funerals. This tendency to value popularity over fidelity and expediency over integrity must stop. 11. Re-affirm that the Mass is a Sacrifice and not a celebration and that homilies should stick to the Gospel and not about who won the cricket or football. Much of the flock only has only one hour a week to get Catholic direction and that time needs to be used very precious. We don't know when our last day on earth is. 12. Encourage communion on the tongue and reinstall altar rails to visually demonstrate to the flock that something incredible is happening at the Mass each week and that they are truly receiving the precious body and blood of our Lord each week. Every week we see precious particles of our Lord been potentially dropped to the floor. 13. Illicit intinction is wrong and the communicant is not permitted to dip the Host in the Chalice, nor can anyone receive on the hand a Host that has been dipped in the Chalice. 14. Return the celebrations of the Ascension and of Corpus Christi to the day's they fall rather than when it is more convenient for the flock. 15. We need to stop the growing trend of irreverent attire at Church, the flock need to have the expectations re-set. 16 Sign of Peace during Mass, is not a time for chatting or celebration and

priests, are never to leave the altar in order to join the congregation during the sign of peace.

17. Priests and Nuns should be immediately recognisable in and out of Church and dress as such.

Why has the Church ignored Vatican II confession?

Maybe to assist more with the poor and to be more understanding with the refugees. To form more liturgy committees more joyful ways of presenting God's word. Communion under both species like we use to would assist more with complete fullness of being aware of the presence of God. Bringing celebration of the Resurrection into the Mass, by making it a more lively experience. Some people are querying the hosts' likely allergy for some of the congregation, needing a gluten free host substitute.

I was reading Thomas Berry 'the dream of the earth'. He put clearly what I have been feeling about the prayers in our Eucharist. And I quote from Page 25, 'Unfortunately Western religious tradition have been so occupied with redemptive healing of a flawed world they ('we' my word) tend to ignore creation as it is experienced in our times. Consequently one of the basic difficulties of the modern West is its division into a secular scientific community, which is concerned with creative energies, and a religious community, which is concerned with redemptive energies. So concerned are we with redemptive healing that once healed, we look only to be more healed' end of quote. Brings out two things for me which I hope we can resolve with the findings of the Plenary Council. 1. An end to dualism. Secular science/ sacred religion/Church; spirit/ person. Body-soul/person. 2. I am amazed how many times sin is referred to in our liturgies. Little is said about the wonder creative world we live in. "Valley of tears" is a syndrome which I would as we tear from our Church language. Thank you for this opportunity. I did find difficulty trying to get onto the website. Kept being given puzzles to work out. [-]

Upholding the Sacraments. Encourage the use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation. The other two rites are dead in the water like the fish in the Darling River! Influence of secular forces within our Society—How does the Church deal with such? Effective communication between hierarchy and laity Redefining the role of the parish priest—especially in rural communities. The challenge of us serving parishes in small rural communities therefore involving a new look at Ministry, for example, married priest, deacons, women priest. Ongoing education of priest and laity, especially concerning the Eucharist (example, revamping and reintroducing the Program Summit and Source). Churches working together in rural communities to manifest strong witness and unity within the local community, for example, churches open and welcoming others from the Catholic Community to celebrate funerals. (In [-] the celebration of 'Christmas without Them' for families who have lost a loved one throughout the year) How do we sustain the Christian churches in small rural/remote communities? The other denominations can't afford to sustain a minister. The Catholic Church can because of low salary paid to clergy and because we are systemic. ** Welcome of members of other churches to communion. Addressing the cultural differences in rural communities between a priest from another country/culture and the local culture—particularly difficult in small remote/rural communities. Royal Commission—addressing the outcomes in a realistic way especially historical cover up by bishops. Will there be a process for 'de-frocking' priests who have offended? The importance of eliminating 'clericalism' and dismantling the authoritarian structures of the Church. How do we involve and support youth and young families? They are the future of the Church. To recognise and affirm the role of Catholic

Schools to be Church. Often this is the only contact families and children have with the Church. (meaningful experiences of Masses and liturgies) Discover ways of listening and reaching out to the disaffected and marginalised. How do we engage with those outside the practising community? The process of the Plenary Council listening sessions is an example. We had very few under 60 attend. A recognition by the Church of women who are living 'the single life'. Openness to other Religions both Christian and Non-Christian. Review of our understanding of Sacramental Marriage, for example, most Marriages celebrated today are outside the Catholic Church building. The use and promotion of the Media, for example, Mass on Demand and other on line spiritual and theological websites. The effective outreach by Churches working together, for example, membership of Rural Australians for Refugees. Should the Church be more inwardly looking or reaching out? Seminary Formation What is the life experience of men entering the Seminary in [-] and what is their formation during their seminary years?



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2

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

QUESTIONS FOR PLENARY COUNCIL

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

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

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

1. Why aren't all priests offered the option to be trained to offer the Extraordinary Form of the Mass?
2. Why has the Church routinely ignored male spirituality and why does it seem to see masculinity as a problem to be managed instead of a gift to be cultivated and promoted?
3. How do we get our youth more involved?
4. How do we protect and support our priests who are doing the right thing in leading our parishes?
5. How can we make the Church community more inclusive?
6. How do we encourage people (not just men) to be leaders (priests) in our Church?
7. When are our priests going to be able to marry and when are women going to be able to become priests?
8. Why are so many of our Catholic schools full but our churches are empty?
9. How can we train our priests to be open, inclusive and faith-filled shepherds who work in the community—not isolated from them?
10. What can we change to make the Mass more inviting?
11. When is the Church going to move away from a celibate, patriarchal society to one more reflective of the people in the Church?
12. How do we ensure the past mistakes of the Church and its leaders (particularly those involving sexual abuse of children) are not repeated?
13. How are we going to be a truly missionary Church?
14. How can we awaken our churchgoers, from being followers of mere habit to being truly energised by the gospel, inspired to bring hope to all?
15. How can we best bring all Catholics to understand the meaning of true community?
16. How can we truly reach those on the margins?
17. When will the Church teach the catechism in Catholic high schools?
18. Why doesn't the Church in Australia actively promote saying the rosary for the conversion of sinners?
19. How to engage the lay people and encourage active participation?
20. What role(s) could/should lay people play in our Church?
21. What plans are there to formalise programs of increased and continuous adult faith formation?
22. Do we need a new model of Governance?
23. Do we need centralised governance or is there a place for small group communities?
24. What is the Church in Australia doing to continue to combat the weakening of moral law in society?
25. How can lay people in Australia help to support our Church?

26. Will we become more inclusive? (Priests being able to marry, same-sex marriage, etc.)
27. How is the Church going to deal with the declining number of priests?
28. How will the Church address the extremely large numbers of people leaving the Church?
29. How can parishes focus more on the needs of their local communities?
30. Why can't priests get married, father children, sign employment contracts with the Church and be paid a reasonable weekly wage for their parish work?
31. How can we find more common ground with fellow Christians?
32. How can we re-build trust in the Church within the broader community?
33. How will we inspire future Catholics with a genuine desire to be part of a (parish) faith community?
34. Why don't we use gender-equitable language in ALL our texts, including set prayers and readings?
35. What is the current percentage of practicing Catholic schoolchildren whom are attending Catholic schools? Why don't we insist that to attend a Catholic School the child and parents must practice the faith?
36. Why do we permit priests and nuns to not dress as priests and nuns out of church?
37. Why do we not call out those in politics who promoted themselves as Catholics but then are for abortion, euthanasia or same sex marriage for example?
38. The future of priesthood, could celibacy be made a choice?
39. Will the Church be more inclusive of people who have experienced divorce?
40. Will communal celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation become the norm?
41. How is the Church going to engage the younger people and encourage the disengaged to become active participants in their Catholic faith?
42. How are we going to make Mass more engaging and inclusive for all?
43. Is the Catholic Church moving with the times?
44. How can we expect the Church to grow if there are so many rules that exclude people?
45. When will the Church have the courage to call into question those priests who don't adhere to the Church teaching?
46. What are we doing to meet Catholic students' needs and involve them in community events, potentially hosted by the Church?
47. How is the Church moving towards relevance to those disengaged people of society?
48. How does the Church plan to adapt to a changing world?
49. How can the leaders of the Church, in Australia, help make the practice of our faith more relevant, meaningful and appealing to younger generations?
50. How can the Catholic Church embrace other Christian faiths and promote itself as a friendly, caring, humble organisation?



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 37 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 conversation with a newly ordained priest at my parish a few years ago. He said, "If I walked onto the altar to say Mass and there was a female altar server I would turn around and walk away, refusing to say Mass until she left the altar". This young priest physically shuddered while saying this, shuddered at the thought of a female being on the altar with him. My husband, who was with me, good-naturedly knocked the priest on the arm with his fist and said, "Come off it, what is wrong with a female altar server? She can't help being female, that is how God made her." The priest responded "Females have no place on the altar, it makes them look like handmaidens to the priest and that gives a very bad message to the congregation." I didn't ask him what sort of message having little boys serving on the altar gave to the congregation, he was clearly a lost cause. At my parish sometimes there is a female reader but that is it. The male acolytes assist with communion. The music is very thin and often no one to lead the hymns or play a musical instrument. There are only boy altar servers and only males on the altar. The female only sacristans are seen before and after Mass setting up and cleaning up. At another Catholic church I go to in another parish, there are female altar servers and Holy Communion assistants. These are two very different attitudes to female parishioners. However, at the more liberal parish, the majority of the congregation don't even genuflect when they enter or leave the Church. The schoolchildren who attend some weekday Masses don't genuflect or kneel in the Mass. I find this disappointing. Lastly, my faith and prayer to Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop guided me to good physical health after fifteen years of struggling with a debilitating chronic illness that the doctors told me I "just had to live with". It was through her intercession that I found the information that led to a cure. Women of the Church and in the Church are crucial to the future of the Church, we make up more than fifty percent of the congregation.

My own experience of faith is that I am a cradle Catholic. I was taught about the faith by my mother and by being taken to Mass always. Despite that, it did not become my own until I was about 26 yrs of age, after experiencing much anxiety and failure in my life. My own faith and belief in God came from my great need and I could not survive let alone thrive without the comfort of the Eucharist and my faith in God. I had been a member of a Religious congregation prior to this, had completely broken down, had no qualifications but in the midst of these years had been fortunate enough to have exposure to a snippet of Theology and had heard about a

<p>loving and forgiving God. I begged God and his mother for help and finally I completed some study that led to a fulfilling career and happy life. Never forgetting my loving and all powerful God.</p>
<p>I perhaps regard myself as a person that grew up with the faith. My parents were Catholic. We were taken to Mass every Sunday and basically had the tail end of the Latin Masses and some cranky priests and nuns. I think this may have turned a few people away from the Church. I greeted Vatican II with some excitement as I was young and a new system was being introduced. My parents were less excited about it and questioned the new ways. I heard that a lot of older Catholics stopped going to Church as they could not agree with the changes and thought them heretical. However, I had no problem accepting the new ways. However, after I left school I like most other people began to question aspects of the faith. A lot of people in my age group did the same and totally abandoned religious practice. I had an advantage in that I was able to read various articles about various subjects and seminars in the Church that kept my faith alive. Although I feel I still do not see my faith as deeply as clergy and religious. I find that young people today seem to be ignorant about various aspects of the faith that were given when I was young.</p>
<p>I live and work in a very conservative parish which is not very nourishing to my spirit and to other parishioners I have spoken to. I am holding onto the Church with my fingernails. It is a drastic situation.</p>
<p>My upbringing in rural [-] involved attendance at Church every Sunday. We were involved in the Mass and in Church community activities. I moved away from Church during my late teens and twenties but still attended some Masses with parents, family and some friends. After becoming a parent, my husband and I decided that our children needed to be involved in the Church community and to develop an awareness of their own faith and spirituality. We also wanted them to experience and be involved in the positive action side of the Church—justice, compassion, welfare etc. I hope that our children will continue to further develop and nurture their faith and involvement in the Church.</p>
<p>I attended Mass on a weekly basis, until our priest was accused of a child sexual offence. He was abandoned by the local priests, who are meant to be his family. Are they not? He was acquitted by a court and since has not been reinstated to practice his faith. He remains totally committed to his faith and the priesthood but those of the parishioners, who have witnessed the disgraceful treatment and neglect of him, have turned their back on the hierarchy of the Church. I am one of them.</p>
<p>I received a book on textual criticism from my father, and a couple of years after reading that was invited to a Traditional Latin Mass by a mate of mine. For the last year, I have gone every Sunday, as well as whenever it has been offered at a time when I am available, to Traditional Latin Masses offered by both a diocesan traditionalist priest, and SSPX priests.</p>
<p>I see deprived Catholic schools—with teachers who most of them don't even go to Mass ... and our schools are turning over more atheists than practicing Catholics!! Kids nor their parents know their faith!!</p>
<p>My experience is from having been born in Italy, which endeared us to treat everyone equally in Christian values. This is missing in Australia's Catholic Church. Myself, I am very involved with the</p>

local community and have helped many migrants in social cohesion creating a strong and harmonious local community.
In this diocese, many of the priests give homilies that focus on relics, following rules and obedience. They do not encourage compassion, empathy, generosity or acts of kindness. For Holy Thursday, when asking for volunteers for the washing of the feet, one of the priests asked for male volunteers because women would not be good enough or appropriate. One of the churches has put in a lot of artwork on the back of the altar that is distracting and over the top. It is distracting and takes focus away from the crucifix and tabernacle. It is reminiscent of pre-Vatican II ideas. The parishes need to focus on the people, being welcoming and inclusive.
We feel the Catholic Church in Australia brings a community together, and people of all ages enjoy the celebrations throughout the year. Commitment to family and the wider community has shaped us. We have always received great comfort from fellow Catholics in times of need.
As a teacher going for an employment interview at a Catholic School I was told by the Principal that I had no faith as I was a Lutheran. I feel this is unnecessary and moving in the wrong direction of where we hope to be moving as a nation of acceptance.
Our experience as Catholic educators of younger children has given us insight into children's faith journey. We can see Jesus through the eyes and experiences of the children.
We have all noticed a lack of connection and engagement with students to further develop their faith. During school Masses children are disengaged but with positive homilies children can make better connections.
It took one priest to turn my father away from the Church. He stood in front of the congregation in a small rural town and said "Don't come to communion if you are gay, if you have not received communion already this week, if you haven't been to confession this week'. My dad comes to church to support my mum, sisters and I as we continue on our faith journey, but will not receive communion himself, this priest totally turned him off. This makes me feel frustrated and it is unfair that the priest said these things.
I married my husband (who had to have an annulment). I'm curious to wonder why he needed this as from our end it just appeared to be a way for the Church to stamp authority and make some cash.
Community being welcomed into a new church with priest introducing you to others.
My faith was influenced greatly by the faith life and the practical way my parents lived their Christian lives.
I have been blessed with my faith experiences for most of my life, I have been a school REC for the past 10 years, but I have heard so many horrible stories of how other RECs have been treated by their priests, I know of a young teacher who went to receive Reconciliation as her class was about to receive the sacrament and the priest told her he would not accept her reconciliation as she was living with her partner and he told her to leave! He is not God!!! Unfortunately, this sort of issue is common in many Catholic schools.

<p>My experience of the Church and faith has been a very supportive Church through all stages of my life. It has been a means of meeting and connecting with new people when moving to different towns. Great when children were growing up to see other families with the same values praying together and socialising through family groups. Many priests who have been in my parishes, walked the footsteps of Jesus and were willing to "roll their sleeves up" and understand the real issues of families and support teenagers. Most have been in touch with the real world and not put themselves up a pedestal and thought they were "God". I have had wonderful role models through family and religious.</p>
<p>My faith, came from my parents and instruction from the Sisters of Saint Joseph. I think too many of us have relied on the schools to instruct children in Catholicism and it has become a Chinese whisper. I also trusted the Catholic education to the nth degree and now I am discovering, some 20 years later, events that have led to serious problems within my family and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it, except retain my faith, pray and trust that our problem's will be fixed. Hence my feelings regarding Catholic education.</p>
<p>My experience with the Catholic Church has not been so much related to faith but community. As a non-Catholic working for the Catholic Church I have found the community to be welcoming, strong and kind. This has helped with my path in life.</p>
<p>It has helped me to think about the way in which I treat others and would like to be treated myself.</p>
<p>I grew up in a Catholic family, attended a Catholic school and attended church every week. I am now a Catholic schoolteacher and strive to bring my own children up in the Catholic ethos. Even with my own upbringing, I find it extremely hard to instil the traditional elements of the Church.</p>
<p>I have recently been participating in scriptures with more depth as my son is doing his reconciliation. The priest is interested and knowledgeable and my son and I appreciated his engagement with us. Then through my school, we have a priest who is out of touch with the younger generation. Unfortunately, students 'switch off' during Homily as they find it difficult to understand him and the message he is giving.</p>
<p>I love going to church, to be inspired. But some liturgies are better than others, some I can't relate to. The priests I have experienced are lovely, but extremely elderly. Why do some parishes have great congregations and other dismal? How are you helping struggling priests. How are you collecting stakeholder feedback in order to make change on the ground level? How is making students recite the Angelus going to translate to them wanting to go to church?</p>
<p>My faith experience is what drew me to become a Catholic. The open and accepting nature of the congregation I joined and immediately felt part of the Church's family.</p>
<p>The Church has been instrumental in shaping my moral and ethical code.</p>
<p>Being a part of the Catholic Church during my secondary schooling helped to produce a strong foundation of values. The belief and value system of Edmund Rice greatly assisted in this foundation forming.</p>

As a young person, I have always had a faith. Throughout my education, I remained committed to the Church and later married within the Catholic Church. I will seek to engage my children with the faith and church in the same way that I was, however this will be made more challenging if the Church does not change and transform with the community.
My family has provided me with a strong background in Catholic faith by the way they have approached their everyday lives and their attendance at Mass. I have been educated by Christian Brothers and Presentation Sisters throughout my school life as a student and have found them to be amazing role models (people who have lived their lives in the service of others—their knowledge and understanding of the trials of life and their guidance have been amazing).
I've seen priests put down students who are not regular attendees at Mass for not knowing what to do, instead, they need encouragement and inclusion. Our youth especially struggle with the royal commission and find it hard to trust priests, they don't understand the exclusion of gays.
We are taught that God is love from a very young age. But my experience of Church, is often fear and judging. This is sad.
<p>- Celebrations of the Festa Della Madonna in the [-] parish is a vibrant and cultured expression of Faith.</p> <p>- Australian Catholic Youth Festivals—Father Richard Leonard speaking in [-] diocese.</p>
Although I no longer attend church, my experiences as a child in a Catholic School have shaped my way of thinking in a positive manner.
I have enjoyed being brought up as Catholic, attending Catholic schools and living God's message in many ways every day.
Experience with parish priest has a significant effect. Grew up with an old testament, "fire and brimstone" approach in my local church, which focussed on sin and consequent punishment. As a young adult was exposed to a priest whose only message was about love and forgiveness. Brought me much closer to my faith.
In 2017, I started attending daily Latin Mass at a small house chapel in Sydney. Every morning there was Adoration, Benediction, Rosary, Mass, Confession, recital of a litany and every Saturday a perpetual novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. This deep spirit of prayer and silence profoundly nourished me over the time that I attended and helped me to seek Christ above all else. It was incredibly wonderful to be given every possible opportunity to grow in holiness and to be given every help to grow in virtue. The priests gave real spiritual direction and were genuine pastors of their flock. There was nothing more wonderful or awe-inspiring than to kneel before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, exposed for the veneration of the faithful. This experience has shaped me and taught me that to truly seek Christ we must be obedient, humble, docile and filled with that love which only Christ can give. St John of the Cross said that God speaks in divine silence but regrettably in many other churches there is so much noise and chatter.
Take communion to people in our local base hospital most Wednesdays. Today, once again, I came across a seriously sick, anxious, nervous person with a story I hear all too often. "Hi. I'm from the Catholic Church. I have Communion. Would you like to receive it?" "I would love to, so

much. But I'm divorced and I've been told I can't." Tears flow. "I've been told even going to confession won't help me." "I really don't think our loving God would not want you to receive Communion when you are so ill." "It's not what the Father said. Sorry. Not today." (I'm not a priest.) I find this an absolutely disgusting situation. No wonder we aren't taken seriously and people are leaving in droves. We have imposed so much guilt on people. In their darkest hour, they are not able to turn to our loving God and receive the bread of life, the bread which we eat to have life in us. It's times like this, and they happen regularly, that I am ashamed to be Catholic, that I think this whole religion thing is a bloody farce! I'll be back at the hospital next week. There are 'good' people who receive each week and look forward to someone coming to give them the Bread of Life in their hour of need. But I also know I will again be frustrated by the pathetic manmade laws that are hurting, harming, damaging good people who happened to find the love of their life. Annulment is not the answer—it makes all children of the first marriage bastards!

4 years ago, I became very sick with the flu. 3 days I was in bed no eating or drinking. I couldn't get up without falling over. I was a terrible Catholic at the time. At this point, I prayed the first rosary in years. I had a dream of a woman saying to me (I believe it was Mary) "I am very disappointed in the people of [-]." At this point I woke up, I checked my Facebook. Fr [-] shared the Medjugore message of that day. It was September, she said in her message "I am asking for you all to pray the daily rosary and to fast" I took that as a big hint as to what I needed to do to sort out my marriage and my life, which really was in a mess. From then on I prayed the rosary and Divine mercy chaplet every day, and life has never been better. I stopped listening to bad music, watching terrible movies, etc. Completely turned my relationships around with those who were important to me, and in doing so I have seen a huge improvement in not just myself, but others I'm in regular contact with. The answer is to get others to pray more. No one understands why they need to pray. Everyone thinks science is against God, they're so wrong! St Dominic changed the hearts of millions by teaching the importance of the rosary. We don't need to reinvent how we do things, it's already been tried and tested. The only issue we have today which is slightly different is that today people don't believe there is a God. Every SRE lesson should commence with philosophy, proof God exists. Once we know we can't hide we do listen. Both students and adults! We need to be reminded constantly that God exists because... We are made in his image which means we are designed to do good... If we go against God we become unhappy. God wants us to be happy that's why we need to pray and go to confession. Once we do that the rest of the aesthetics we like such as good music at Mass will follow.

I grew up in a small country town (where I still live) with parents who were practicing Catholics. They passed their faith on to their children as well as they could. I gained nothing from my Catholic schooling to really teach me about my faith and most of my friends were no longer practicing by the time they left school. I had a brief time of doubt in my late teens but quickly realised that without God, nothing made sense. I was fortunate at about that time to become involved with the Confraternity of St Michael the Archangel in [-]. My sister lived there and I would travel to [-] a few times a year to take part in retreats and the St [-] Summer School. I learnt more there in a few visits than I did in my entire school life, and I realised I was not alone which was a great boost to my faith and resolve to remain faithful. Many years later, after marrying and having children, we were extremely fortunate to have a young priest in our parish

who was willing to run faith education classes for several years, even though they were not well attended. Once again, I learnt so much that I never knew that I didn't know! These experiences have helped me explain our faith to our children. But although they also attend Catholic schools, they are even more isolated in their faith practice than I was as a teenager. We need to reverse this trend. Our kids need to know what we really believe and why, and their parents need to know this as well.

The religious women orders were a very important part of my early church and school experiences and they were amazing well-educated and inspiring women. They are still a wisdom to be celebrate and acknowledged in our schools and parishes today. The Catholic school system is flourishing with huge numbers of families choosing to give their children a Catholic education. Social Justice and compassion for the poor is deeply part of our school system. Stop complaining about the people who aren't in the Church and celebrate and enjoy all the people who are turning up. Respect and value our elderly and visit them when they are older and in nursing homes—they build our churches and schools and should always be remembered. Get rid of the notions of sin, the devil and hell and preach a life of joy and positive attitude and outreach. Model and use different ways of praying and use them in liturgical celebrations.

Family Rosary after dinner as a child. Attending boarding school and the Nuns who taught us. My faith waned considerably as a teen and also a young mother.

I was an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and have seen some horrible things how disrespectful and un-Catholic certain parishes are. I only will attend Traditional Mass now, either Latin Mass or SPPX , could we please have more of these and less of that modern stuff, they are ruining our Church and Mass, there will be nothing left for the future, all the popes of the past should be taken into consideration and the beliefs of all the past fathers not just the last 70 years, when it seems all we have done is lost much of our tradition, it is sad and devastating and no way to tell where it ends, frightening.

My experience of faith in the Church has been shaped by a family, which was founded in a marriage between a committed Catholic and a convert who had a very open and accepting mind when it came to dealing with those of other religions at a time when it wasn't the "in" thing. I was schooled by religious orders who challenged me to think for myself and to read and study the documents of the Church, especially Vatican II. So I have sourced help, information, courses or retreats over the years in an effort to keep myself up to date. A few years ago, I went to a Second Rite of Reconciliation before Easter. My son had died some months before and I was having difficulty focusing on details so I made a general confession just confessing 2 sins and asked for forgiveness. I was totally blindsided when the priest told me he could not give me absolution because I had not confessed enough serious sins! He asked me to go through the 7 cardinal sins and check again. I told him that the fact that I had come to reconciliation to ask for forgiveness was sufficient for him to give me absolution. However, he refused. So I told him I would sit there until he gave me absolution. After quite some time he gave in and he gave me absolution on condition that next time I came to confession I told far more serious sins! Was he instructing me to go out and commit more grievous sins? I have never been back to him for reconciliation and sadly, he is our only priest. That night, 2 other people who went to him for confession approached me and asked me how I got on. Both those people have not been back to reconciliation since

because their experience was so distressing. Another story I would like to share that worries me concerns reconciliation with children with the same priest. I had prepared my class for the sacrament and taken them to the Church as I had done several times before with Father. However, this time Father arrived in flustered and waving a rectangular piece of cloth and saying "I must explain this to the children." Then he proceeded to tell the children that the cloth would go over a wire grill, so it would hide them. Then they would go into a little room (which had no light and no window!) and they would tell their sins to Father who would be on the other side of the cloth. When I asked Father if they still had the option of going face-to-face he replied "No". This was the first I knew or anyone knew of the introduction of the old form of reconciliation. The children were mystified! As one said, "So we tell our sins to a wall?" I replied "Pretty much." How on earth does this reflect the love and care that Jesus showed whilst on Earth? And we wonder why so many people have nothing in common with our Church?

My best experience is as a child growing up in a very Catholic family and learning lifelong values from the Sisters as well. Then it all lapsed again until only recently when my husband passed away. I met the local priest who was called to anoint him and after that I have found comfort in attending church again. However, because of all the 'rules' of the Church that obviously I had broken, I questioned whether I could call myself 'Catholic' or not.

I am 70, born in Australia, with Australian parents of Irish and UK heritage. My father was brought up Protestant, my mother Catholic and we children brought up Catholic. Listening to others' experiences it wasn't a strict Catholic household. We went to Sunday Mass my father coming Christmas and Easter and went to Catholic schools. I remember looking up to the heaven one afternoon on yet another procession around the school grounds (didn't bother me too much as we skipped maths, not my favourite subject) and saying I don't believe you exist God. That was that. Nothing much happened. We continued to go to Mass etc. I can't remember much perhaps a feeling of relief. I did my nurse training in a Catholic hospital, fortunately a busy city one so religion wasn't too much of an intrusion. I ended up travelling, marrying and living in England. After our son was baptised (more for the family's sake if I am honest) and started in a Catholic school, I started a slow journey to where I am now. We were incredibly lucky, on looking back and reflecting, that we had a bishop and priests (each very different) who had imbibed the Vatican II ethos. Not fully but enough to encourage the laity. We were in the same parish for 30 years; a parish where the laity were the Church. Nothing was perfect, never was, never will be. Ongoing faith formation was encouraged, the homilies were meaty, and the social teaching of the Church was encouraged. All the parish priests made it plain that the Church was the people and the people were the Church. I have never heard any ordinary Catholic in Australia express this sentiment. Not long before we left, the parish facilitated an Ignatian prayer companion week. I spoke to the woman who was my prayer companion about returning to Australia. Her sister lived in Queensland and she had visited. Her advice was to think very carefully as she has observed a complete lack of any spirituality in the Australia Catholic Church. On reflection, after 4 and a half years I now see what she meant. We came to [-] diocese. I consider myself a member of my local Catholic community but do not consider myself part of the Australian Catholic Church. I have listened to people's stories of their experiences over their lives. I see and hear the hurt caused by the Church. This is especially true in [-] where the style and personalities of the last 3 bishops

have harmed and warped people's lives. There was a time of spiritual growth and recognition of the gifts of the laity, in the Spirit of Vatican. Then an authoritarian bishop, frightened of people's spiritual growth, who harked back to the era where the priest was king and dictator and the laity paid and prayed and did what they were told. A seminary was set up and priests formed in this narrow authoritarian, utilitarian uniformity. Even the Catholic school system seems to have caved in. The 3rd bishop inherited a near bankrupt diocese where the influential and powerful wanted no change.

My current parish has an outstanding priest who is inclusive, welcoming, honest and let us see what really Living the gospel looks like. I enjoy going to Mass, connecting with others and being part of a parish where all are welcome. This is very rare and a gift I am very Thankful for.

I was brought up in a family where my Mum and Dad did not attend Mass but they sent the 4 of us to a Catholic school and sent us off to Mass each Sunday once we started school. My early years were formed by the Green Catechism and probably fear that I would go to Hell if I did not follow the rules. In the late 1970s, I was fortunate enough to attend a Cursillo. This gave me a real sense of what a Christian community could be like, I gained a real and personal relationship with Jesus and I became a "thinking" Catholic not one who operated out of fear and following the rules. I was lucky enough to be involved with a small group of ladies following the Cursillo for over 30 years (Group Reunion and Ultreyas). Our Group Reunion was a place where we could share how we were living out our life of faith, gaining support and encouragement for the work we were doing in our community, sharing our joys and sorrows, praying together and supporting each other. Since Cursillo I have belonged to many prayer groups, Lenten and advent programs and some ecumenical groups - these have all provided much nourishment for me. I believe these small groups have been instrumental in my growth as a Christian.

Our Church in Australia has benefited from many goods works in our Church e.g. CARITAS, Kioros, St Vincent de Paul, Catholic hospitals and Catholic schools. In our own parish we have Family Groups and more recently a program 'mainly music' (mainlymusic.org.au, a program from the Baptist Church for preschoolers, parents/carers). Mainly music, it is a fun music group for parents or primary care givers to enjoy together with their young child. Throughout the session, children develop gross and fine motor skills, language, imagination, mathematical and pre-reading skills as well as socialize with others. Each mainly music is associated with and is run by volunteers from a local Church. Children are introduced to music, creativity and more. Plus families are given a chance to think about the God-part of life. This is achieved in a loving, shared family environment our parish Church. Both Family Groups and 'mainly music' are there to support us in living our lives as Catholics by modelling the Beatitudes. Another program in Wagga Wagga is ErinEarth a faith-filled program instigated and set up by the Presentation sisters. "For people, generally, their story of the universe and the human role in the universe is their primary source of intelligibility and value. The deepest crises experienced by any society are those moments of change when the story becomes inadequate for meeting the survival demands of a present situation." - Thomas Berry "The challenge before us is to create a new civilization based on a cosmology—a story of the origin, nature, and purpose of creation—that reflects the fullness of our current human knowledge; a story to guide us to mature relationships with one another and a living earth." - David Korten. These statements encapsulate the focus of ErinEarth's roots within the Christian

tradition of understanding all creation as sacred, an expression of the divine permeating the evolutionary journey of the universe. We live out of a mindset that is inclusive of all people, organisations and of the whole Earth Community. Every activity of ErinEarth, from sustainability workshops and spirituality days to school visits, has as its focus the mind shift from Earth as Resource to Earth as Community of Life.

When I was young, the Church and God were the only authority. I was taught in Catholic schools and I feared rather than loved God as a young child. As I grew I had personal experiences of God, particularly through Cursillo, which changed my perspective of God as a loving Father and developed my personal faith. Recently I have felt that the local Cursillo movement has lost its way: for example, when I was last on a team several years ago, there was discussion about whether we would have Mass every day over the weekend of the Cursillo. I couldn't understand this thinking because the Mass and the Sacraments are an essential part of our Catholic Faith which I feel must not be abandoned. There is also much concern about the training of priests in our local area at present. However, I feel that all priests are different and have their own way of serving God but we need them so we can receive Jesus in the Mass and have our sins forgiven in Reconciliation. I attend Mass weekly and more often if I can, and pray for those who don't because I feel they are missing out.

I have gone to Church my whole life but as I have grown I have questioned the Church and why I am still in attending. I hope this plenary council will help the Church to answer this question why am I still attending.

I became Catholic about 8 years ago. I was previously married to a non-practising Catholic, whom I made seek permission from the Catholic Church to marry us in the Anglican Church (no children). I have had this marriage annulled. It was quite a hard process as I had already remarried, to a non-practising Catholic, and had 2 children (both Baptised Catholic) and pregnant with my 3rd. I didn't feel like I was going to be accepted into the Church and nearly made the decision not to bother. The only thing that kept me going was the fact that I wanted to be under the same Religious umbrella as my children and husband. It was also a very expensive process for me. I was a stay at home mum at that time, so my husband's wage paid. I was very lucky that my Aunty also helped me out as she is very devout and was very happy that I had made the decision to become Catholic. My Aunty, who lived 6 hours from me, gave me more support and guided me more than anyone in my home town as I felt that the parish priest at the time was not very approachable and I didn't feel comfortable speaking to him. On a whole, I felt a bit judged by the Church and by a panel of people who had my religious future in their hands. I also felt this way as I had been told that an annulment was not always granted—it did make me question whether the Church really wanted more people becoming Catholic. Despite my feelings towards the annulment, I am glad that I made the decision and kept going with the process as it brought my husband back to the Church and we attend Mass as a family. My son still serves as an Altar Server and my youngest daughter does the readings with me. All 3 children help with church setup and have volunteered their time with fundraising events. I have also met some wonderful people through church and have the utmost respect for all the priests at our parish. Having Faith has also helped me through some difficult family problems.

My experience has been and still is confusion.
<p>Unfortunately in [-]and the [-], and the wider [-] diocese, many priests like Fr [-], Fr [-], Fr [-], Fr [-], Fr [-] push people away from the Church.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are more concerned with painting behind the sanctuary than listening to people. - They refuse to give the sacrament of reconciliation to people who show up and go through the motions of the first rite of reconciliation, first passing judgement on the value of their sins. - They refuse to give communion to people when they process up, claiming that they know the parishioner is not in a state of grace and so they will go to hell if they receive communion. - They do not get to know individuals for who they are, rather judge them for not following a set of rules strictly enough. - They focus on icons and relics more than building a community of support with the people in their parishes. - They preach on Sundays that everyone who is not Catholic is going to hell and it is our biggest job to bring them to the Catholic Church, if we don't we are not good enough. - That it is a shame that not enough men put their hands up to do readings so they are forced to allow women to help. - That the Bible cannot be read by people without a priest present, that they are not capable of understanding what The Word of God means without assistance. These men exemplify why people, especially young people, are turning away from the Catholic Church. They are not made welcome, encouraged to live within their wider community as passionate people whose faith lives as part of who they are. Lay Catholics are not, cannot and should not be encouraged to live lives as cloistered religious members who place priests at the centre of their moral code. Young people want dynamic faith, a calling to experience God in their own hearts and lives. They want to know how they can see, feel, touch God. Living in an age of instant gratification means that the pull of eternal life is no longer as enticing as it once was; youth today need to see impacts on their lives today. They are searching for meaning and hope, which the religious dogma and judgmental words of these men does not supply. I know this from teaching in a Catholic School and working with young people every day, teaching religion. I have been a practicing Catholic all my life; going to Mass on Sundays and playing music in my parishes. I do not go to Mass in this area as every time I go, I feel judged, excluded, encouraged to judge other people, distracted by too many images and half put to sleep by the music that rarely has enthusiasm.
<p>Yes—I was raised by a Father who was brought up by the Marist Brothers. My Mother who was also brought up by the Nuns. Both attending Catholic boarding schools. My four siblings and I all attended Catholic boarding schools. We all loved it so much. We all learnt so much about life, friends, religion, compassion and love. My Dad was a tough Man. He raised us, his children with a very strict Catholic upbringing. We all thrived on our family, our religion, our connection with the Church. I would have loved for my three children to have experienced the same upbringing as I did. My husband and I tries to do so, however times changed. Children have more say, more attitude, more choices. Life has changed. A few years ago we attended Mass as a family, the</p>

parish priest told the congregation not to partake in holy communion if we hadn't attended every Mass each Sunday. Well my daughter said she is still partaking in communion despite what Father was saying, my son just sat there along with my Husband, my youngest daughter didn't know what to do and I just sat there not knowing if I too should ignore Fr and take communion or not either. That was the last time any of our three young adult children attended Mass. I am so sad of that. It actually breaks my heart. I would like them to feel welcome at Mass, any church and where they are living. I would love for them to know they are welcome at church when they feel the need to be closer to God, when they are troubled, stressed or feeling lost, lonely. It should be there safe haven as is was and is mine. This is something I can't fix, it can't be retracted or taken back. My middle child my daughter was married last October and was married in a garden, not the church. How heartbreaking was that!!!! We still follow my late Father's words of LOVE that's something that our local priest can't take away from me, my husband and our Children.

I have always been a Catholic but did not practice my religion for about 40 years. I "came back" to the Church about 4 years ago (not that I actually ever left but I didn't attend Mass). I cannot describe the peace that sharing the Mass with my fellow parishioners and being able to partake of the holy Eucharist each week has given me. I now feel at peace and it's a wonderful experience.

Looking around the whole of the community I see a sea of humanity in need, whether that be in the area of poverty, aged, drug addicts or just the fall and are now down and out. This is where you will find the need for the compassion as shown by Mother Teresa in her work and Pope Francis as he on Good Friday washed the feet of the lowest of the community and others.

I'm someone who was raised by a post Vatican II family who felt up till that time that religion was compulsory. I'm pleased to say to that I got to choose and I chose God and Catholicism and didn't attend a Catholic school like my older siblings.

Yes—but I believe a better forum for this type of consultation is face-to-face. In this regard, I would suggest that the Plenary Council have open sessions in each diocese for individuals to come forward and express their concerns IN PERSON to bishops IN PERSON. At the moment, I am in the [-] diocese that has had no bishop for over 2 years. The Apostolic Administrator—[-]—does not return phone calls or emails—notwithstanding the fact that he knows that my parish priest has physically bullied my boys at Mass, publicly humiliated my family at Sunday Mass, and read my private letter to him at a parish Meeting to further defame me and my family. We are literal outcasts—lepers—in our parish community of [-] (near [-]).

It is my experience here in [-] Parish, [-], [-]. As a Pastoral Associate, I have experienced the joy of ministering to people of varied ages—elderly sick, families, youth and children. Helping organize events throughout the year for them is a joy and a cross. In a parish setting, the need to be continuously listening to the unspoken wants and hopes of the faithful helps one to let go of what one wants but what the people really want. Working with other associate priests also is a cross, as one needs to also allow oneself to be more generous with one's time in order to also cater to what they need from you for their own ministry involvements. It is beautiful, wonderful and at the same time a cross to bear as the burdens of others one needs to carry on one's shoulders as well. I am extremely grateful to God for giving a rewarding ministry in [-] Church [-] especially in the area of 24-hour Adoration Chapel Ministry as Chapel Coordinator and Events

Coordinator assisting the parish priest Father [-]. I am extremely privileged to be working with Father [-], who is flexible and possesses a listening heart, a true shepherd of his flock. As well, I am extremely privileged working alongside my co-sister in the MACE Community, who is extremely dedicated to God and the ministry in the parish...am extremely privileged to be part of an active parish community...may our good Lord continue to bless and fructify His work in [-] parish!

My son was suffering from croup, he was approximately 12 months old, I was sitting next to his bed without any lights on so as not to disturb him and help him to sleep. His breathing was laboured. I started to pray the rosary asking for him to improve. While saying the Rosary a light appeared above him near the ceiling. It was a beautiful feeling, there was no fear at all. It shone for about 2 minutes and then disappeared. I noticed my son was no longer labouring with his breathing but was breathing normally and sleeping peacefully. He has not suffered from croup since that night.

I travel extensively around the world and the priests talk to the congregation not at them as is more often the case in our parish. I would also suggest that the parish priest should be moved more often every 3 years.

My faith is so easy and without guilt. God lives and works through me and keeps me sane!! There are so many ways to heaven but the Mass and sacraments seem to help me and give me a break from life.

I believe in the Bible and The Trinity but I am ashamed to say I am a Catholic I actually say I am a Christian, especially after watching the recent Senate called in Rome re: Sexual Abuse I was disgusted as what I saw was a room full of Cardinals all elderly men and I had the feeling nothing was going to come of this as I truly believe, now that I have also seen happenings with Pell's trial (I will not call him Cardinal) that the hierarchy of our Church are only interested in keeping themselves in the lifestyle they are now accustomed to and that is being "Princes" of the Church. Until the Church changes and the hierarchy come down to the level of the people who after all are THE CHURCH nothing will change and it will crumble. There are other churches that Christians find more welcoming and spiritual. I feel for the nuns, brothers, priests who have given their life for the Church and who have been the people God wanted them to be as representatives of Jesus and I know many of these wonderful people. How has this affected them? I have hope in the Royal Commission we held as well as the Plenary Council that is unfortunately coming to an end and I pray that the bishops of Australia will stand up for Australian Catholics and do the right thing. A very big broom is needed to sweep out all the rubbish in our churches, especially the seminaries and even higher up.

I grew up as a Christian, although I was not Catholic. I started volunteering for a Catholic organisation called the Women's Life Centre, working in the Cafe called [-] in [-]. Through this cafe and getting to know the devout Catholics, the Lord slowly but surely showed me that the Catholic Church is His Church, and I have loved my priests and learning about the traditions of the Church. The more closely I follow the traditions, the closer I feel the Lord draw me to Himself, the Closer I feel I am to Sainthood (which is still a long way away lol).

I don't think that I am too sensitive, but I have come across two priests in my time whom I have considered arrogant in their relationship with me and other people. This sort of thing hasn't shaken my faith in Jesus or the Church, but it most probably has for some previously practising Catholics.

The [-] diocese has not had a bishop since Sept. 2016 when Bishop [-] retired due to ill health. He was very supportive of our group. In the absence of a bishop, we are noticing that people are becoming self-censoring, and some appear to be implementing their own agenda. There seems to be a power vacuum and initiatives seem to be being stifled regardless. The fear and uncertainty of the 1982 to 2002 period seems to be returning. Some local parish priests seem to be returning to a rigid model of priesthood where the laity have no role.

I recently participated in the Crossroads Pro-Life walk across Australia, which starts in Brisbane and ends in Melbourne. As part of the walk, we would attend daily Mass and spend our weekends talking in various parishes along the way. Fair to say we saw a great variety of the churches and parishes that the East coast of Australia has to offer. It was very encouraging to see that most parishes we attended are following the traditions and truths of the Catholic faith, however some left a lot to be desired. One thing that has always stuck me about our Catholic faith is that it is very diverse. Having travelled extensively overseas and attended liturgies in a variety of countries and languages, I can attest that the Church is very much universal. Attending Mass wherever I found myself, I definitely felt a sense that I was part of something greater than myself, something that reaches beyond language and culture. This experience helped to affirm my Catholic faith in a time of my youth where I was struggling with my beliefs. Of course, there were a few instances where I witnessed liturgical abuses and priests who simply did not understand the faith at all, and this reflected in their congregation. It can be disheartening to witness the immense beauty of our faith watered down and almost lost in some parishes. However, many of the churches that I have visited and the ones that I regularly attend here in my home parish provide me with hope that the Church is truly alive. I believe that when a church or parish does their best to promote the faith, and shows us that it is something that is beyond us, there can be no doubt about the certainty of what we believe. Our culture in Australia is somewhat relaxed and easy going. Unfortunately, I feel that this relaxed attitude has also become a part of the Church culture here, particularly in our liturgy and the education of our students. The main reason that I restarted our current [-] Young Adults group, was a definite need to further our faith. Many young people finish or leave school without a firm grasp of what it means to be Catholic or are left wanting to know more with nowhere to go. Since starting our group last year we have built up to almost 30 regular attendees, including a handful of non-Catholics (we have had 2 conversions to the faith through our group). If there is any encouragement I can offer to the plenary council, it is that our Catholic faith is well and truly alive. However, we need strong leadership from our priests and bishops, and parishes and liturgies that promote a sense of the sacredness of what we believe. We are a part of something greater than ourselves, we need to reflect that in our lives by living as Jesus lived and promoting Christian values in our society.

Whenever I have consistently sought Our Lord in His sacraments, my life has borne much good fruit, in great contrast to the times I have tried to pursue holiness on my own strength. God's call for us is not complicated: seek to submit to His will always, learn to lovingly embrace the crosses

He sends, not reluctantly. Pray ceaselessly. Imitate Our Lord. We do not need a gigantic Council to discover this.

My sister was raped by a priest and that has had a lasting effect on her and all our family. The hurt has carried on, and each of the family members have dealt with it in different ways. We don't 'get over' it, but that is an experience of Church that we have to live with and try and get on with our lives while we carry this. I personally have had many conversions in my faith experience and thankfully know a loving God who is always part of my life, despite my experience of Church.

I was received into the Church in 2016 as a previously non-practising Anglican. Prior to my conversion various social currents and changes, driven largely by emotion, caused me to consider how we can know and get to the truth of things. I quickly formed the conclusion that only the Catholic faith had answers, as the secular world did not offer answers only choices, and the other churches contradicted one another and changed their beliefs over times. Reading about the lives of the apostles and great saints such as St Augustine, St Anthony etc. Whilst sacred scripture and tradition and the lives of the saints sustain me, and of course prayer, the liturgy in many parishes is so far from what drew me to the Church in the first place that it is actually detracting to one's faith, not conducive. Hard truths can be challenging but they made me respect the faith, hearing soft sermons and sing-song hymns is not challenging and will not attract the people needed to sustain the Church in the future.

My faith journey was formed by a very Catholic mother and the Mercy sisters. My faith has been nourished by mostly caring pastors. I was and have affected by the sexual assault by priests on my friends and have had to stand up to diocesan hierarchy when known, not charged paedophile priests were operating and not called out in the 70's and 80's. I am in shock over George Pell's conviction as I have stood up for him as he was our college Principal at [-] in [-] and we found him to be honourable. My faith is a bit more dented if these accusations are true and I question where were our procedures to follow this up. Sadly, when he became Cardinal he joined the Church Elite and was not always a great model.

I was the youngest of 6 brought up with a strict father where if my brother or sisters stopped going to Mass they were kicked out of home. Therefore, my only perception of God was that of an angry God where if you don't do the right thing there is punishment and you will go to hell. By my early thirties I had lived in many locations in Australia and NSW having been with the Military and the Ambulance. Having attended many different parishes, I often found a lack of warmth/welcome and few support groups for such. Not even welcoming people at doors with Mass leaflets. This left me feeling cold and unwelcomed by the Catholic Church and I simply gave up attending Mass and lived a Prodigal son episode in my Life for some years. On returning to my hometown while reading "Through the Eyes of Jesus" by Alan Ames, I asked Jesus to fill me with his love and he DID. I was baptised in the Spirit of which I was aware as my mother had been in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) when I was a child. This is what brought me into contact with a new Charismatic Prayer group beginning in a neighbouring parish. In the last 12 years I have attended the same CCR Prayer group weekly, been a member of the core group leading Praise and Worship, Given sharing's, and have since moved onto the diocesan core group for CCR. I have attended many Renewal Days, Conferences of both diocese and national with international guest speakers. Unfortunately, I have to partake all of this in a neighbouring diocese as mine does

not have CCR, yet. It is through this gradual formation and teaching that I have learnt about the existence of the Holy Spirit and his guidance and how I can live my life through this relationship with Jesus. Only because of this formation and teaching have I began an appreciation for the Relationship of Jesus in the Mass, and the return of attending the healing sacrament of Reconciliation, from the boredom of an hour of Adoration to now being on the 24 hour chapel roster and the time passing so quickly. Daily Mass attendance and reading Scripture every day. I have also completed a Certificate III in Beginning Ministry and Theology. Since my first encounter with the Holy Spirit and my journey of love and understanding of Jesus' love for me, I only wish I could share it with the whole world. I think there needs to be an involvement of the Laity sharing in their own parishes, personal testimonies or journeys with the Lord. By a greater involvement in leadership in parish life the priests could be freed up to return to their original ministry of visiting the flock. And I believe priests need to know that they are cared for, loved and supported by us and appreciated for saying Yes to Jesus. I would like to thank the Australian bishops for this initiative of the Plenary Council and giving a listening ear to the laity, for being a world first in the Church opening itself up to the people. Perhaps a further opening of the Vatican II Window! Thank you.

I was with the Church as a child until 18 years. I came back when I had children of my own. Young families who create a sense of community within the Church helped me. Hearing voices of outrage at the abuses in the Church from fellow Catholics helped me to return.

My experience of Faith and Church is of women supporting women. I have just returned from the life-changing experience of the Council for Australian Catholic Women's Colloquium, participated in rich listening and dialogue and reflected on what I believe has been my Faith journey. I have been shaped and formed by participating in Scripture studies led by women and men who subscribe above all to Gospel values. I have been shaped by being with people as they serve the marginalised on the fringes, priests, religious and lay. The message of the Gospel has been proclaimed loud and clear in those places where my Faith has been shaped. Rarely has that been inside a church. Most occasions have been without words. My image of God and the places where I find God have changed since my days as a young adult. That would never have happened if I hadn't had the experience of Faith in small groups who helped me explore and question all that I had blindly believed. Priests who have listened and met me in the mess of my everyday life have had a strong influence on me. One bishop led me to recognise Christ's face in those suffering in silence around me. How I pray that those I love will be graced with the people in their lives that I have been blessed to have in mine.

From a child have always believed in Jesus Christ and the God almighty. Having been in a number of serious motorcycle and car accidents, in these times of pain and suffering, with no family to support me, I would pray to God that he would be there to relieve my suffering. My prayers were always answered and he never let me down. I had strayed from the Church for a large number of years, but after witnessing the power of the Lord just recently (September 2018) when my biological father who was 93 years old contracted pneumonia. At the time my father had just been moved from the emergency ward to the general ward, when my sister and I met Father [-] as he completed his nightly visit of the patients in hospital. We greeted each other and he then asked who we were visiting? We said our father had just been moved into one of the rooms. He

said he hadn't visited him and would we like for him pray over dad and anoint him. We both replied yes, so we followed Father [-] to dad's bed. My father was also suffering from advanced dementia as well as pneumonia and was not in a receptive state, while Father [-] recited the Our Father we could see dad nodding his head at the end of each sentence of The Our Father. Suddenly he awoke from his state and began a conversation with us as he would have three odd years ago. My sister and I looked at each other in amazement and Father [-] questioned our surprising look, we told him how his dementia had regressed to a state he was some years prior. My sister is a nurse and she hadn't seen anything like this in her 35 years as a nurse. I then rang my mother to tell her of the sudden improvement, I handed my mobile to dad and she was able to have a proper conversation with dad. Since that day, I have attended confession and go to Mass every Sunday. I volunteered to be a Guardian at our Adoration Chapel and attended our local Plenary Council group.

We too experienced the same separation from the Church as our siblings did, but through the inexplicable mercy of God have been drawn back to the faith and our mother, the Church. We both ceased attending Sunday Mass during our late teens/early twenties. Having imbibed the lies of our materialistic and hedonistic culture and through our own disobedience, we were robbed of the joy of a faith and grace-filled life. Yet a hunger remained. We were called back through encounters with joy-filled young Catholics, who took their faith seriously and showed genuine care for others. We were showered with grace through being exposed to Eucharistic Adoration, *lectio divina* and the Rosary, and encountering Christ's mercy in Confession. Sadly, these practices had been all but abandoned in the homes and parishes we grew up in. We were won back, in part, by the truth the Church proclaims about sex and the human person. We had been led astray by the lies of the sexual revolution and this caused hurt to our innermost self as well as sadness and shame. We saw the truth in the writings of St John Paul the Great on the Theology of the Body and those who expounded on them such as Jason and Crystalina Evert, Jonathon and Karen Doyle and Byron and Francine Pirola. The vision of authentic human relationships that they proclaim inspires us, and contrasts with the gaping abyss of sadness and confusion that the 'hookup' culture and cohabitation leads to. We were also won over by: • the clarity of good teaching provided by Saint John Paul the Great and Pope Benedict XVI, and those who confidently preached Christ's message and the teachings of the magisterium such as the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia (Nashville Dominicans), Jason Evert, Christopher West, Bishop Robert Baron, and John Pridmore; and • the beautiful preaching of Fr Ken Barker MGL and other MGL priests, who, alive, with the Holy Spirit, preach so powerfully of God's love and mercy. The same can be said for the writings of Fr Jacques Phillippe. Through these witnesses we came to be aware of the treasure trove of wisdom held by the Church and the writings of its saints, including Saint Ignatius of Loyola, St Therese of Lisieux and St Benedict. We have noted that the places where ministries and parishes are flourishing is where orthodoxy is proclaimed and young people are being challenged to live their faith to the full. We need confident and faithful preaching of the Gospel and the Church's teachings even more as we face an increasingly aggressive secularism that wishes to foist toxic views upon us and our children.

My brother was basically turned away from Church because he was gay. If we are all made in God's image, how can we not support and love each other and be accepting of each other's

choices? My brother and I loved attending the local youth 'rock' Mass at our former parish in Castle Hill, but after he was treated poorly, it was hard to return.
During my years as a teacher, I saw, on a number of occasions, how unhealthy a climate was to be found in our seminaries. These young men, prepared to give their life in service to God, were given a training which, sadly, has often led to an immaturity and an ego-enhanced lifestyle. They have been betrayed by the people put in charge of their care. Like Jesus and the apostles, could not our seminarians learn on the job, as tradies or professionals do, living IN the world so as to bring it to God. They need as normal a life as possible, certainly not cooped up in a ghetto.
I used to HATE gay people because of my faith. But then a dear friend of mine came out and I realised the Church was wrong, just wrong.
I had been raised as a Catholic in a home where my mother was a daily Mass goer and my father was a non-practising Anglican. I have three siblings. My father was happy for us to attend Catholic schools and they both went without, in order to pay the fees. My mother wanted this as she had attended state schools and felt that Catholic high schools would give us the knowledge she was unable to impart. She was very let down by this idea. I attended a Catholic girls' high school where the Presentation Sisters were in charge of the school. My brothers attended a Christian brothers' high school and none of them now practise their faith. The Presentation Sisters were influenced poorly by Vatican II and leaned towards social justice without balancing it with teaching us any catechism. I left school without any knowledge of my faith and kept attending Mass to please my mother. When I had three children, I met a priest who actively taught the faith during homilies and challenged us to find out more about our faith and God's love for us. The result of this was amazing in my life. My Anglican husband has now become a Catholic and we regularly pray in the home and I attend Mass most days. I have made sure my children have learnt their faith and didn't leave it up to the schools which are still letting us down. You can't love what you don't know.
A devotion to Mary has been my rock throughout my life. I am a Legion of Mary active member and have been for many years and it is a devotion that seems to have waned but that the Church in Australia which is under the protection of Our Lady Help of Christians could do much worse than to encourage knowledge and devotions to our Blessed Mother.
The Church in my diocese has not listened to the legitimate claims made by the congregation concerning priests but instead fabricated evidence against a non-offending clergy member.
I was almost a victim of Fr [-] in [-], who would often appear at my mother's doorstep late at night. I have vowed not to ever enter a confessional since a very explicit questioning took place when I was in Year 12, and a priest began a series of very explicit questions to elicit a response from me. I am employed by the Church and have been witness to priests claiming to be higher than angels, who have threatened teachers for a whole range of things. The Church is a place of irrelevance now due to decades of priests in my parish who have pandered to ultra-right wing conservatism, locking out those they deem unworthy, and criticising even the processes of this plenary council. It has become a shambles, and now that George Pell has been convicted, and the fact that [men] high in the Church are unwilling and unable to accept this, is symptomatic of a Church lost to its people. The hierarchy and power must dissolve. People, lay educated people,

some more qualified and educated than many priests, need to be given authority. A non-clergy council to oust clergy from the Church must be set up, and all clergy should be held to civil account before being hidden by the Church.

As a young working man in a southern suburb of [-] living myself, I tried to find ways of meeting young Catholics. Most of the people attending Mass at my local parish were elderly. There was one small group promoted by the parish which met regionally, but typically only 4 people would attend. One of the attendees told me about another group which met in a northern suburb of [-] which seemed to be attended by a lot of young people. We both travelled to one meeting of this group to try it out. The group was the Confraternity of St Michael, organized by the late Fr [-]. It was a real eye-opener to attend a group which met once a week with usually 100 young people in attendance from all over Melbourne and beyond. The meetings typically started with a talk by Fr [-], in which he would explain a section of the Catechism, or a document issued by Pope John Paul II or an apologetics topic. It developed a better understanding and love of the Catholic Faith in me. It also helped me to develop a number of friendships with likeminded peers who were looking for a deeper meaning and way of living life (beyond the shallow materialism promoted by secular society). I also ended up meeting the woman who is now my wife at one of those meetings. My life would have likely taken a very different (and colourless) turn if I had not attended those meetings. I only wish there was something like that which today's youth (who are sadly not taught to love the Faith even in most Catholic schools) could take advantage of to find greater meaning, truth and joy in life.

When the Church has met me where I'm at. When faith is put into action.

Having a supportive faith community has been the most significant thing to continuing to walk as a Catholic today in Australia. Trying to live true Catholicism, meeting and being supported by others of like mind, and availing myself of the Sacraments especially daily Eucharist and regular Confession as well as Adoration have been real lifesavers. Praying for each other as we each share the burden has been and continues to be an amazing help. Reading good materials, hearing good talks and having wonderfully trained priests and bishops as well as lay evangelists has been inspiring. People who attend daily Mass together are SO supportive of each other. Our local parish needs to be welcoming and supportive. We have moved to find such a parish. I would like to add that the Church's teachings DO work. They lead to happiness and peace. We need not be ashamed or embarrassed. God is with us and leading us and guiding us.

Spending time in Adoration has healed me, fed me and inspired me to be the person that I am today. Someone who wants to be a saint and who wants her children to be as well. Before encountering Christ in the Eucharist, I lived a very worldly life and still thought I was a "good Catholic" even turning up to Sunday Masses still hung over from the weekend of drinking and partying, I would still line up to receive the Blessed Sacrament without any qualms because I didn't know any better. Jesus in the Eucharist opened my heart, he showed me my sins and filled me with peace, Peace that I never encountered before. Eucharistic adoration strengthened me to leave that path I was travelling. It also healed me from all the hurts I was carrying around, which were mostly caused by my sinful lifestyle. I am so thankful that I was able to have this conversion when Eucharistic adoration was made available at my parish.

The Legion Of Mary brought me back to church because they invited me to go.
As an immigrant from South Africa, I was pleased to be coming to a country that has such a large Catholic population over 25% of the population. It seems that many Australian Catholics don't appreciate this. Many parishes seem to be predominately migrant.
I am pleased that people continue to return to the Church. Many turn away in their teenage and early adulthood, but still return to bring their children up in the Church.
I am fortunate to live in a parish where the priests are faith-filled, hardworking. They preach the gospel of Jesus Christ fearlessly and compassionately and demonstrate their deep faith in the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist in their manner of celebrating Mass and their reverence and sincerity in the liturgy. It is interesting that in the 1980s a Protestant Minister commented to my husband and me that the Eucharist was the centre of the Catholic faith. How perceptive of him, and that was the first time in my adult faith that I really appreciated that. As a child, I attended a State primary school so it was the calm, steady example of faith practice by my parents, as well as the loving ministry of our Irish priest and the dear, kind ladies who heard our catechism questions after Mass who laid the foundation of my faith. Then I was taught in secondary school by nuns who had a deep knowledge and love of the God and of the Catholic Church. There was no doubt for a moment that they believed what they were teaching us and were certainly Christ-like in their tireless care of us. After leaving school there was the opportunity for social and religious development in the YCW movement, once again under the tireless guidance of wonderful priests appointed by bishops who had great foresight. So those of my age were very fortunate to have that loving care of 'Mother Church'.
As Catholics, we are poorly informed about the Bible. Protestants don't have a central governing authority now means we have literally tens of thousands of different Christian sects but we as Catholics do not know our Bibles well. Not knowing our Bibles well means a lack of understanding which leads to silly arguments based on hearsay and not referring to either the Bible or Magisterium or Sacred Tradition. As well as that we by and large don't know how to pray with the Bible as well. Bibles for numerous Catholics are used to hold up things in the lounge room gathering dust. We know that the Word of God is both alive and cuts finer than any sword and yet we don't promote this. I have rarely witnessed a homily that utilizes or teaches micro Lectio Divina inside the Homily. The homily serves as a guided meditation, but which words are speaking to each individual? Why aren't we trained in homilies or exposed in homilies to listen for the words that God is speaking to us and to both meditate and contemplate those words for the remainder week? I have provided some examples you can witness here https://www.youtube.com/user/LectioDivinaPrayer . Meditation and contemplation are often used interchangeably yet they have two distinct purposes. Meditation is to pull apart the text and the critical historical method is one common approach to this. However, after Meditation, which is a journey of the mind, we then need to move to a journey of the heart otherwise the meditation exercise is fruitless, yet I've witnessed even bishops giving a homily and they leave it at the meditation phase and not the contemplation phase. God is a loving relationship not solely an intellectual pursuit; the intellectual journey of scripture should always serve the love journey of the mind so that we deepen our relationship with God authentically and not theoretically. I wrote a paper whilst studying at the Augustine Institute for the New Evangelisation that shows the

importance of Lectio Divina but it wasn't until I became a consecrated member of a religious order that I got a deeper "why" and "how" Lectio Divina is vital for deepening our relationship with God. Since then I have put a training package that connects the dots why praying with Scripture is so important and how to do it along with warnings of spiritual pitfalls. I would be happy to discuss. My wife and I haven't been blessed with children, married for 20 years, and there are a few things I see important to learn through the Church, namely "how to advice" for raising children, parent support groups, adoption and fostering etc. There are so many pressures on families that having support groups from the Catholic perspective is really necessary. How to discern God's will for ourselves, spiritual direction, the Sacraments and how to live them post the first event, how to evangelise. Classes in this area for support seems to be a big area to address.

After Sunday Mass a Catholic school teacher complained to me of the lack of 'substance' in the RE program. She described in great detail the difficulty she has in trying to flesh out lessons for the children, indicating that the older program used was much better. Typically people think of priests as the ones who complain about the inadequacy of our current RE programs, but this encounter indicated to me that many of the teachers are suffering under the current arrangements and would like to see change.

My faith journey is simple, I had a Catholic upbringing in Catholic education and lived my life based loosely around the sacraments. I have always been spiritual and looked to my faith in times of gratitude and need. However, for one reason or another I have never felt drawn to the Church. It was not my place and it was not where I belonged. It did not have that welcome feeling to it, only the memories of many school lessons being yelled at to be quiet and/or the glares of parents and guardians as you tried to stay focused to a homily that might have well been spoken in Latin. Masses that went past their due time with speeches of repentance and guilt on those who were there in attendance and seeking positivity. My faith journey was reignited when as a teacher I found myself teaching back in the Catholic Education system and I suddenly felt at home. I participated in the World Youth Day and this was the ignition to a flame that had long withered away. I witnessed faith in different forms being celebrated in thousands of ways with acceptance, enthusiasm and encouragement in abundance. I found a place in a much larger community where all I had to do was be the best version of me and this was a religion I could relate back to again. The other youth spoke my language and shared my opinions. The Masses and celebrations were targeted at us with open minds and fresh delivery. I returned to my school with a new drive and a pathway back into the faith that I was sure other youth could follow. I have been reminded and renewed in my formation around the spiritual benefits of body and mind our faith has to offer. If there was ever a time needed for morals and values to be instilled by faith, it is now. I am now excited at the prospect of change for our faith in this country. A new beginning with hope of future growth and strength in reasonable change.

I recently started attending some Emmanuel Community events... they attend Eucharistic adoration, do true praise, and are genuine, Spirit-filled and peace filled people. They seem more like the early Church.

I have been going to Mass now for around 60 years, I have heard some very good homilies and some very poor ones. The best homily I ever heard came from an elderly priest who spoke passionately about the relationship Christ desires with each one of us. He spoke of Christ

stretching out his hand and lifting Peter out of the water, as Peter began to sink beneath the waves. It was, he said, a sign of how close Christ is to each of us. This priest was able to preach from the heart about his own relationship with Christ, and convey that to us. Priests need to develop a strong personal relationship with Christ and make that the springboard of their homilies.

I am a 33 year old man from a Catholic family growing up in My family with 5 brothers in Sydney, we were weekly Mass goers and went to Catholic schools from k-12 then on to the Australian Catholic University, I received all the sacraments as did my brothers. As I left high school to study nursing. I continued to go to Mass weekly but gradually made excuses not to attend. I engaged in a relationship seeing nothing wrong with pre-marital sex. I worked in a non-Catholic hospital in operating theatres that performed "therapeutic abortions" which I saw as OK to be a part of as I had been taught not to judge. My partner had at least once used the morning after pill which I supported her decision, as it is a "woman's decision over her body." I knew all these things were against Church teaching but chose otherwise as the Church was "out of touch" and "too rigid." I had formed my own conscience and once challenged by my now wife who in my mind was very conservative, I continued to receive communion. I had formed my own conscience but as my wife taught me more of the rules of the Church I realised I had had 13 years of Catholic schooling and 3 years of university and I did not understand the precepts of the Church. I had no memory of being taught of venial and mortal sin and the sacrament of reconciliation was not readily available at my Church. As I began confessing in a weekly basis and the graces of the sacrament helped me to grow in faith I had a confessor telling me I am wasting my time and my time would be better spent doing other charitable works. If only that priest had known my journey and how easily I could fall without the graces of God. I am now a regular attendee at Sunday Mass and attend some daily Masses, I participate in a 24 hour adoration roster each Friday night, I am a father of four and I thank God for the graces he has given me to get through some difficult times. My second youngest has severe congenital birth defects that will cause a lifetime of trouble and by God's grace our family will keep the faith. I would say I was your typical statistic, a young man who was brought up in the faith without truly being taught the faith. Only through my relationship was I finally taught the faith that I could confess with true sorrow and try not to sin again. Please teach the faith that those who walk away know what they are leaving and that those who are waiting to hear God's voice finally hear the truth.

We are extremely grateful for the solid faith formation given by the priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei, by the Friars of St Francis in [-], and by the priests at [-] Church in [-]. Their constant guidance and care helps us to know, understand and love the Faith and to try to live our Faith well, joyfully struggling for sanctity in our everyday lives i the middle of the world. We are extremely grateful for the education of parents and children offered at [-] College, at the [-] Schools, and by the Catholic Family Association. Their support of parents as primary educators of their children is invaluable, helping us to strive for a life of faith and virtue.

Mary's love for me guided me to be able to love, where I did not know unconditional love, if I who was a hardened soul could be softened so can the individuals in Australia who I can see are desperate for Heavenly love so consecrate Australia to either The Immaculate Heart of Mary or to Our Lady HELP of Christians. There is no time to waste.

I came to the [-] diocese in 1989 with my husband and 3 children aged 9, 6 and 3. We left our parish of [-] in [-], administered by the Marist fathers at [-]. It was a vibrant parish with laity actively participating in liturgy, prayer groups, RCIA program and school activities, always encouraged and guided by our priest. These are some of the things I saw, experienced myself or saw happen to others in my time [-]. It began when the newly appointed Director of Education decided to bring in a new curriculum for RE in Catholic schools. Many teachers and parents felt what was being proposed was a retrograde step and not in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II. However, the proposal was supported by a very vocal and well-financed group of orthodox Catholics. There were many meetings of concerned parents and teachers voicing their opposition but the new curriculum was imposed with the support of the bishop and no real consultation/discussion from him. Some very un-Christian events happened at this time with some of the more vocal lay people on the progressive side being targeted with hate mail, anonymous phone calls and some religious teachers being removed from the schools. At the same time, many school principals in [-] were replaced with people of more orthodox views, who always came from outside the diocese. Many forward-thinking priests were 'banished' to the outskirts of the diocese. There seemed to be a network of spies who reported what they saw as 'misdemeanors' or rule-breaking to the bishop and people were reprimanded. Some priests would not allow women on 'their' altar as readers of lay ministers of communion. Parish Councils became less than advisory bodies and some were dismissed. From the pulpit people were admonished for being divorced and worse, remarrying. The list could go on. Since then the diocese has been deeply divided. The divisions have forced some people to leave the formal Church, many changed parishes seeking a more supportive priest. For me, I did change my parish and sought adult faith nourishment from groups such as Cursillo and Family Groups which were tolerated and from more 'underground' small informal groups who studied scripture and engaged in Lenten and Advent programs, prayer groups, book groups and the like. Whilst some adult faith programs, such as guided weeks of prayer and Centering Prayer meditation can now be more open, they are still questioned and attacked by the conservative group, including priests from the [-] Seminary. These priests have installed altar rails in some parish Churches, use Latin phrases throughout the Mass and there are a number of regular Latin Mass services in the diocese. There is little dialogue between the diverse groups. Some priests are very supportive of their lay people but others are quite dismissive and show a lack respect for women. Can only hope...

Ever since infancy, I was taken to adoration. It has a great impact on my life and my family. It's the cure to my anxieties, anger, and depression. Being a part of a big family of 11, I find that whenever we visit Him in the day, he truly blesses the rest of our day and our work; but in neglect of adoration, it's havoc at home as well as our relationships. Luckily, I was blessed with good Catechesis from priests of the Fraternity of [-]. Whereas, relatives were taught by their religion teachers in "Catholic" schools that the Eucharist is merely a symbol not the true body of Christ, that Sunday Mass is optional, that Lent is not penitential, and that confession once a year is sufficient—I was taught the opposite. As a child, I didn't find Mass to be inspiring, or something to look forward to. It felt like it was part of a weekly routine. When I was 9, we started attending the Latin Mass. Admittedly, my first thought was 'Why have Mass in a language you can't understand?' I later understood. For a year, on Sundays we alternated between both Novus Ordo and Latin Masses. It was through doing this that we could see the contrast. I was now 10, and I

recognised that Latin Mass had more reverence for God, and understood why those who grew up with the other Mass lost their faith. All male servers rather than females; Pipe Organ rather than a guitar; Old traditional hymns instead of songs from the 'As One Voice' book that contained Protestant songs; the priest facing east as he lifts up our prayers and offers the sacrifice to God rather than facing the people with his back to the tabernacle as if performing for the congregation; Communion received on the tongue rather than on unconsecrated hands; and the respect of speaking outside the church rather than within. Gregorian chant won me over; its solemnness, and its power to calm the soul. I now sing Chant in a choir, and have been doing so for 5 years—I love it, and couldn't live without it. Moreover, the use of the Latin Language—the language of the Church, used for centuries, and the Bible, and doctrines written in it, is not something dead but sacred. I am now currently studying it. Hence, I could see which Mass was worthy for the King of Kings.

In [-] College, next to [-] University, a priest regularly skipped the creed. His reason was that the university students wouldn't understand. This was likely a dishonest cover for this priest's lack of Catholic faith. At [-] University in [-] in 2000, in a class that was compulsory for future primary school students, the Bible studies teacher explicitly denied the truth about the Eucharist, saying that the reality was "transignification" (sic) and not a change of the bread into Jesus. She also strongly hinted that the Apostles made up the story of the resurrection some years after Jesus had died. Both of these cases are examples of the abuse of leadership, of people who take advantage of their Catholic leadership positions without the integrity to tell those they serve the truth, that they have lost their faith.

My parents' example of attending Mass and the Sacraments, reading the Bible to us, discussing our Faith and praying the rosary provided a strong grounding. Attending WYD 2000 had a lasting impact by exposing me to the Universality of the Church and the vibrant faith of so many other youth. The inspiration and teaching I received at Youth Groups, ADORE Eucharistic Congress, Marian, Eucharistic and pro-life processions was important. Time spent with Missionaries of Charity in NT was inspirational and formative. The witness and teaching of faithful priests was integral.

The Church in Australia has shaped me into the person I am today. I hope that I am a person of hope, positivity, faith and love.

When the local priest would come around and visit family homes—getting out into the community. Priests were more like 'one of us'.

I had a powerful conversion experience when I was 19, became fascinated and excited about the wonders of the Church and the power that God gives through it. Still am full of awe at the beauty of the Church and her teachings. I am however saddened by the confusion and error that has infiltrated the Holy Catholic Church. It is a continual struggle, I am seeing but a smouldering wick instead of a steady flame, We have the precious pearl, We have the Map. We are not protesting but digesting the truth of the Gospel, protected, guided and led by the Apostolic Church. We don't need to change it we need to change ourselves.

I grew up in a Catholic home. At age 21, I decided that I needed to take my faith on board myself. I had a personal spiritual director who has helped me grow as a person and to struggle to love God

as my father. I thank God that I know my doctrine and what the Church teaches so that I can also pass this on to my children. I also got help to learn to pray. To pray to God as my father who cares for me but who has set 10 commandments for my happiness.

I started attending the traditional Latin Mass when it was available and it was the best experience of my life, we need this to be in every diocese and we should promote tradition rather than modernism. Latin Mass made me convert from Islam.

The Church is in danger of creating an "us" and "them" culture in its schools. I have been teaching in the Catholic School system for 11 years. I have taught Religious Education every year I have worked in the Catholic School System. I have a Graduate Diploma in Theology and active participant in creating a Catholic ethos within the school. However, I am not a Catholic. I often feel that I am a second-class citizen in the Catholic School system because I am not a Catholic. I have seen teachers hired over other teachers just because they were baptised Catholic; however, these same teachers are no longer practising Catholics and do not take the Catholic ethos seriously. I have applied for positions in other schools and been unsuccessful due to the fact that the other applicant was Catholic. This is particularly galling as my eleven years of experience in Catholic schools means nothing. I had an encounter with one of our local parish priests who was shocked to learn that a non-Catholic was teaching Religious Education. He gave me the impression that I had tainted the school with my "heathen" presence. Unfortunately, he is not the only clergy I have come across with this viewpoint. It makes me feel like a resource and not a valued member of the school community.

I grew up in the [-] archdiocese and was actively involved in music ministry and a parish-based youth group from the age of 15 until my early twenties (when I began teaching full-time in a Catholic school). During Masses our group played and sang Sr. Janet Mead's version of the Our Father with faith and passion, and led many hundreds of others to do the same. After a few years this song, and many other hymns sung with joy, were banned. I greeted the updated wording of the Nicene Creed, approved by Archbishop [-], with joy. It was a small step in the right direction in my opinion—that we no longer had to say 'for us men and for our salvation' that Jesus was 'made man.' (I felt very strongly that Jesus was 'one of us' which includes the half of the population born female!) I have spoken the gender-inclusive version of the Creed ever since then, despite moving with my family to the [-] diocese a decade later, where the wording had never been updated. In my new parish in [-] I led the singing every week as part of a small assembly attending Mass in a community hall. I spoke the Creed wording I am committed to, 'for us and for our salvation' Jesus was made 'one of us,' quite deliberately even though the rest of the assembly recited the traditional version. At this time I was teaching full-time in my own parish school for the first time in my career. I was visited by the P.P. Father [-] in my classroom one day after school, without warning. Father [-] told me that I was to discontinue saying the gender-inclusive version of the Creed at Mass. I questioned this, pointing out that the wording I used had been acceptable in a former parish many years beforehand. This argument was dismissed and I was reprimanded for questioning the collective wisdom of the Church clergy. I discontinued Mass attendance at my own parish—my absence from Mass was obvious as there was no-one else to lead the singing at Masses in the community hall, therefore no music. Consequently, about two months later Father [-] arrived unexpectedly at my home one morning during the school holidays. My four

children were at home with me, and I had a friend visiting with her children for morning tea. I answered a knock at the front door, expressed surprise at seeing Father [-], and explained that I was entertaining a friend and her children. Father [-] insisted on coming in to speak to me, so I let him into our front lounge and he proceeded to berate me for non-attendance at Mass. I explained that after the discussion in my classroom, I had chosen to attend Masses at another parish. He asked me which parish, I told him, and he expressed scorn for my choice of parish. He accused me of bringing shame on his parish which brought me to tears. I repeated my commitment to the gender-inclusive Creed and have not spoken to him since he left my home in fury that day.

I had an experience, outside of the Catholic Church, of the power of the Holy Spirit in my life but have found that, in many branches of the Catholic Church, the work of the Holy Spirit is blocked by priests and the religious who have not experienced this power in their own lives, nor have they been open to the power of God working in his people in this way. I believe God wants to renew his Church and that this will only take place as all his people seek his face earnestly in prayer. God wants his Church to be more open to allowing the power of his Spirit to work through everyone in his Church.

As a long term supporter and defender! of the Church in Australia, from regular Mass, schooling of all our children, volunteering and Massive donations and living my life as best I can to follow Jesus, I'm angry that women are not allowed to have more say and are often not recognised and given leadership positions. I think there is a lack of respect by some of the clergy. I'm sad that there are so many young priests who do not seem in touch with modern issues, are not able to engage with the general public and seem Pre Vatican II in their ways and thoughts.

I have enjoyed the sacraments for most of my life. I am very grateful. I have ten children and they all practice the faith and the parents among them pass it on to their children.

I used to be proud to be Catholic. When I found out my brother was gay, it changed my perspective entirely. He has always been gay. He was not turned gay, or did not become gay after a traumatic event. He is just gay. But, he is also the same person that he was before I realised he was gay. And I love him in just the same way now, as I did before I knew he was gay. The attitudes of the Catholic Church towards gay people is atrocious. How can you espouse values of love and acceptance, then show such blatant disrespect and dehumanisation of gay people in everyday life? This extends to women in the Church as well. Both groups of people are openly discriminated against by the Catholic Church. As with anything in life, unless you have experienced something yourself, it is very difficult to see someone else's perspective on something. But I urge you to try. Because I am fed up with having to defend my religion to others, when deep down I agree with their criticisms. I am sure there is a higher power watching over us all and living through us at the same time. I am not so sure that the Catholic Church captures its true essence and meaning. This leads me to feel further and further apart from my faith and I really question what it means to be Catholic. I was not married in a Catholic Church. I have two children, and chose not to baptise them in the Catholic faith. Both of these were deliberate choices, which I had not intended before I was engaged or had children. But the current state of disarray in the Church, and the Church's general attitude towards women and gay people, led me to choose a non-religious ceremony, and makes me think that I do not want to put my children through having to defend their faith and

feel so uncomfortable about it as I do. I am raising them to be loving, kind, respectful, honest, empathetic young people, who regard all people as equals, women, men, gay, straight, multicultural etc. etc. Recently watching the tennis, my son was trying to ask me something about one of the players. It was a game between Serena Williams and another white player. When he was describing Serena, he did not refer to the colour of her skin, but to the texture of her hair and colour of her racquet, as he sees no real difference between him and a person with coloured skin—they are both just people. Similarly, he is just as familiar with seeing his Uncle and his boyfriend, as he is seeing his Uncle and his wife. He sees nothing wrong with a gay relationship, but he does see the love between them. It breaks my heart having to explain to him why they can't be married, but his straight Aunty and Uncle can. I consider myself an intelligent person of sound mind and someone who you would be lucky to have as a member of the Catholic Church. If you do not wish to lose members such as myself, there needs to be drastic changes in the core values and actions of the Church as a whole. The times are changing, so keep up, or we will leave you behind.

A belief that was from my parents was without doubt my faith journey.

On the TV, you see Christian pastors/evangelists full of passion speaking the word of God and getting it out there. I find my faith increasing when I watch and listen (Real Ones, not frauds). But they lack of course Jesus and the blessed sacrament. But they are filled with God's love, humility, concern for others, alive with the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, they don't accept or believe in the Catholic Church. The program I find such hope, joy, and encourage from, rejects it in fact. I believe it would make God extremely happy if we could put those preachers and their faith, courage, enthusiasm and teaching practices into a blender with the Catholic Church, mix them up together leaving behind the chaff (all that may be wrong) and being left with all that is true and good.

I grew up in [-] and went to [-] [primary school] and [-] College [-] for secondary school, and raised by practicing Catholic parents. It was clear in those years that many of the children who went to the Catholic school went to Mass on Sunday, but my experience with my own children having moved with them 10 times up and down the east coast and inland Australia that something has radically changed over the years as only a handful of those that attended Catholic schools with them attend church on a Sunday. This is a sign of a Church in Crisis. I had a lot of early years' exposure to the National Civic Council, Catholic priests for dinner, visits to monasteries and convents. I was fortunate to visit St Peter's, Fatima and Lourdes and have a great devotion to Our Lady. Today I have more than 20 years' experience in public relations and stakeholder engagement and approach my stakeholders with a very much faith based approach, listening to them and caring about their concerns. I am a member of the National Civic Council, a member of the Liberal Party to try and influence faith based policy, the parish council Chairman and school board member. I have four beautiful practicing children at [-] Catholic Independent School and I want to help the Church grow and re-find itself in these challenging times.

I was involved with the charismatic people for about 15 years. The best time of my life. I was about 60 years old.

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 Wagga Wagga.

Country	Number of respondents
Australia	206
France	1
Hong Kong (S.A.R.)	1
Ireland	1
Italy	6
Malaysia	2
Netherlands	1
New Zealand	2
North Korea	1
Philippines	1
South Africa	2
Syrian Arab Republic	1
Zimbabwe	1
Not stated	25
Total	251

APPENDIX 2: COMPLETE LIST OF GROUPS FROM YOUR DIOCESE

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

Name of group	Group size
West Wagga Catholic Parish	500
Marian Catholic College	156
Xavier High School Albury	90
Vieiras	34
Albury Young Adults	33
Sacred Heart Koorringal Parish	30
St Joseph's Parish, Leeton NSW 2705	30
Sacred Heart Parish Griffith plenary council team	26
St Anne's North Albury	22
St Francis de Sales Regional College	22
St Francis De Sales Regional College, Leeton	22
St Joseph's Primary School	21
Group of Parishioners.	20
Sacred Heart Parish	20
Vianney College, Wagga Wagga	20
CACW Wagga Wagga	19
Sacred Heart Church	18
St Mary's parish Corowa	18
St Mary's Primary School, Yoogali	16
St Mary's Primary School Yoogali	16
St Mary's School Yoogali	16
Parish group	16
St Michael's Parish Coolamon	16
Griffith Parish	15
Plenary council committee	14
Sacred Heart Parish	14
Christian Book Club	12
N/A	10
St Michael's Coolamon	10
Friday ladies book club	10
Patino Family	9
St Patrick's Parish Albury	8
Faith Circle Group	8
Holy Trinity Primary School	5
n/a	5
Sacred Heart Parish	5
Henschke Primary School	5
Holy Trinity West Wagga	4

Name of group	Group size
Kurt, Mick and Matt	3
Holy Trinity	2
Sacred Heart Parish Koorringal - 2 parishioners	2
Nick and Jess Morgan	2
Sacred Heart Parish Griffith	Not Stated
Presentation Sisters of Wagga Wagga	Not Stated

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

