

## **PLENARY COUNCIL SUBMISSION FROM FR GERARD MCKERNAN**

My name is Gerard McKernan, Parish Priest of St Kevin's Templestowe, Victoria.

What I submit for consideration by the Plenary Council is a change of culture. What our church needs is a Synodal Church (ie an open and listening church) not just a church that has an occasional synod.

One step to achieving a Synodal Church is for the plenary to make pastoral councils mandatory in every Parish. At present it is scandalous that canon law makes it a law for parishes to have a finance committee, but not a pastoral council. By implication this makes finance more important than pastoral practice. Surely, this is not what Jesus wants of his church.

Further, I ask the plenary to decree that every diocese have a diocesan pastoral council. The election to this body would be through delegates chosen by deaneries of the particular diocese. The flow-on effect of this is giving much needed teeth and purpose to deaneries.

My other submission is limited tenure (say 10 years) for a Bishop in a diocese. I know once a Bishop always a Bishop, but please ask it of yourselves to go back to what you were doing before you were ordained a Bishop – ie Parish Priest or Canon Lawyer or whatever. This encourages freshness and vigour as men know they have a limited time. I speak as a Parish Priest who has served in three parishes as Parish Priest and while I have hated changing, believe the moves have been beneficial all round.

Finally, limiting your tenure in a diocese would help to renew credibility and trust in our hierarchy. I have been a priest for 2 months short of 49 years and the respect and trust in Bishops is at present at an all time low in my experience. Something radical like voluntarily removing yourself from a position of apparent power may do much to restore a hierarchy that needs its authority and respect restored.