



# Snapshot Report

How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is

**O P E N T O  
C O N V E R S I O N,  
R E N E W A L A N D R E F O R M**



**AS WE MOVE INTO THIS SECOND STAGE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL JOURNEY, WE CONTINUE TO SEEK THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** Beginning in July 2019, we are invited to reflect on Scripture, Church teaching and our contemporary situation in order to discern the answer to this question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is open to conversion, renewal and reform? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of the Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who expressed a desire to do things differently in response to Christ and the experience of our people, accepting that faithfulness to tradition requires change that is both personal and communal. Respondents also affirmed the important role of the clergy, expressing their appreciation for their vocation and recognising the need for support and ongoing formation and accompaniment. Some asked for a consideration of alternative approaches to ordained ministry, some for a greater inclusion of laity and different groups in the Church's life, some for new models of governance and leadership, and some for a renewed fidelity to the Church's teachings. There was also a call for a renewed life of prayer and communion with one another, including understanding the many different ways in which we encounter God and experience a conversion of heart.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

People spoke about a number of different topics in **PHASE 1: LISTENING & DIALOGUE**. A comprehensive report on all the voices of participants will be released on **JULY 28, 2019**.

Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- Better communication of what the Church does
- Better formation for liturgical ministries and sacramental programs
- Better implementation of Royal Commission recommendations
- Better Plenary Council process
- Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood
- Better teachers in Catholic schools
- Better use of finances
- Charismatic spirituality
- Communion for all
- Concerns for diminishing parish communities
- Contemplative spirituality
- Creation of small communities/groups within parishes
- Diocesan Pastoral Council
- End celibacy, allow priests to be married
- End clericalism
- End discrimination of LGBTQ
- Fight for human rights issues
- Focus on the new evangelisation
- Greater focus on Jesus Christ
- Greater focus on permanent deacons
- Greater focus on the Word of God
- Greater inclusion of all people
- Greater involvement of the laity
- Greater leadership from bishops
- Greater leadership from priests
- Greater trust, faith and hope in God
- Heal and move beyond the clergy sexual abuse scandal
- Healing liturgies and public signs or acts of reparation for clergy sexual abuse
- Hierarchy to listen to the Laity
- Inclusion of the divorced and remarried
- Laity supporting priests
- Lay-led parishes
- Lay-led liturgies and Masses
- Listen to one another more
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
- Mass to be appealing to youth and children
- Modernise Church teachings
- New leadership and governance model
- New model of Church, diocese, parish
- New translation of the Mass (inclusive language)
- Ordaining married men to be priests
- Ordination of women
- Overseas priests
- Parish pastoral council
- Parishes involved in planning for the future
- Radical change, a new order, inverted pyramid
- Reduce margins between rich and poor
- Renewed call to holiness
- Restore the Third Rite of Reconciliation
- Servant leadership
- Support same-sex marriage
- Transparency in governance and decision-making
- Use social media to engage people
- Welcome back priests who have left to marry
- Women deacons

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“Adopt a change of heart. Adopt a team approach and inclusivity within the Church. Adopt the Gospel values. All baptised have a role in the life and mission of the Church...”.

“As a community voice, the vision we have for an Australian Catholic Church is that it be a place for all Australian Catholics. At the moment, it is not. I would like to see our Church be more inclusive. We exclude the very people Jesus would have walked out of His way to help”.

“To form a cooperative structure of bishop, priests, religious and laity to lead and oversight the leadership and management of the Church. This could be done by a group of people working together as a pastoral council of the diocese or as a group of 6 or 8 on an elected ‘Board’;. There would be an equal number of women and laity”.

“Leaders in the Church, especially bishops, priests and consecrated members, need to be courageous in sharing their faith without compromising on any of the more controversial topics as models for the rest of the members of the Church, especially those members who are disheartened or afraid to proclaim Christ’s teachings”.

“Bishops and priests are called upon more than ever to bear witness to the Gospel values of humility, service and solidarity with ordinary people, especially the poor - in fact and deed, not just in words. As Pope Paul VI once said, ‘The Church needs witnesses more than teachers’—now more than ever!”.

“Priests should have a choice as to whether they wish to marry and have families and serve God in a vocation they have been called to. This can also enable them to minister and support families who are in crises”.

“After John the Baptist had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee and began preaching the Good News of God. He said, ‘The time has come; the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News.’”

**(MARK 1:14-15)**

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“How do we empower our youth to take on more of a leadership role?”

“How can women be included into the governance of the Church at the highest levels?”

“How can a more synodal approach to leadership in the Church at parish and diocesan levels be exercised as a shared responsibility, by virtue of baptism, between both lay and clergy?”

“Our parish clergy are overworked, stressed and stretched beyond reasonable limits. Moving beyond strategies of parish amalgamation and closure, what other options will we explore—and by that I mean, the non-ordained role in making pastoral decisions?”

“Will you review the annulment process so it is more understanding of real life circumstances and not punish someone whose marriage has ended— particularly if it has ended due to abuse and deception?”

“Are you willing to put aside traditions (‘this is the the way we have always done things’) and dedicate yourselves to prayer to hear from and listen to the quiet, still leading of the Holy Spirit—what God has for the next chapter of the Catholic Church is Australia? ”

“How will sacraments be administered with declining numbers of clergy?”

“How do we provide much better support for priests new to their role as leaders; priests in a new country; priests new to a diocese or different place?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## PAULINE

PERTH

**We had a wonderful parish priest.** His humility, willingness to serve, selflessness and compassion changed my life at a time when I was considering looking for an alternative parish or maybe even denomination. He made every person in our large parish feel important to God. Because of the way he radiates the love of Christ, people wanted to be involved. He taught me that humility, gentleness, patience and love are the key to closeness to Jesus. Priests who are part of the parish community, not set apart from the community, make such a difference.



## PENELOPE

BROKEN BAY

**As a married couple with young children, [our local parish] formed my ideal of parish: a warm community with many people participating eagerly in parish activities.** So what was the secret of this parish? I suggest it was a priest who listened to his people, discerned their needs and acted on what he heard; who was warm, democratic and inclusive. As a result, the parishioners responded with wholehearted participation and helped each other both in their spiritual lives and in their very active family lives. Perhaps it was a function of the time and the place, and perhaps now it would not be possible to work in exactly that way, but I need to believe that my experience of vibrant and nourishing parish life is still possible in Australia.



## ANONYMOUS

MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

**One of our group has a gay brother who stopped going to his local parish community as he felt unwelcomed by the wider Church.** He wanted to be an active, practising Catholic who could receive Communion, but felt outcast under existing Church rules. It also put a great strain on his relationship with his practising sister as she was in terrible conflict between her love for her brother and her loyalty to obeying the Church rules. This conflict also extended to their wider family. In the end, he stayed away from church as a way of minimising the family conflict. The sister is realising that Jesus always loved and never judged the marginalised people he came into contact with and that people must always be put ahead of rules in a truly merciful Church. Surely, as a Church, we must be doing the same and welcoming the brother fully into our community.

Read more stories and snapshots at [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/voices-of-the-plenary-council/](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/voices-of-the-plenary-council/)



## RELEASED REPORTS:

Missionary and evangelising  
Inclusive, participatory and synodal  
Prayerful and Eucharistic  
Humble, healing and merciful  
Joyful, hope-filled servant community

[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive)  
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[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/servant](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/servant)

Please note this report contains only a snapshot of thousands of stories and responses shared. A comprehensive report on the voices of participants will be released on July 28, 2019.

<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au>

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#plenarycouncil #listentothespirit

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