



# Snapshot Report

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

**A JOYFUL, HOPE-FILLED AND SERVANT COMMUNITY**

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 a joyful, hope-filled and servant community? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who expressed a yearning for the Church to be a sign of God's kingdom for all people in Australia – to be able to see the Catholic Church in action, and to recognise Jesus. There was an expression of faith-filled hope in the capacity of the Catholic community to celebrate together, to show what it is to be a follower of Christ and to be loved unconditionally by God. There was a call to contemplate the Gospel call to be a servant Church for the good of all people in Australia – particularly for refugees and asylum-seekers and other people who are vulnerable or at risk. Many responses called for greater sharing of the story of the good works done by so many people and organisations of the Church. Some responses expressed a hunger for strong witness of faith, especially by priests, young people and female leaders in parish and school ministries.

## 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.

- Acknowledge Christ's presence in the Eucharist
- Authentic faith teaching in Catholic schools
- Be a witness in society
- Better attention to all aspects of liturgy
- Better communication of what the Church does
- Better formation for liturgical ministries and sacramental programs
- Better homilies
- Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood
- Better use of finances
- Care for neighbour
- Charismatic spirituality
- Church to act as a guide for Australian society
- Contemplative spirituality
- Creation of small communities/groups within parishes
- Cultural Masses
- Defend right-to-life issues
- End clericalism
- Faith formation for parents
- Greater access to Mass and Reconciliation
- Greater attention to music in the liturgy
- Greater connection with and inclusion of Indigenous Australians
- Greater focus on Jesus Christ
- Greater focus on permanent deacons
- Greater focus on the Word of God
- Greater inclusion of all people
- Greater leadership from priests
- Greater trust, faith and hope in God
- Hierarchy to listen to the Laity
- Keep the faith
- Laity supporting priests
- Listen to one another more
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
- Mass to be appealing to youth and children
- More welcoming parishes
- Outreach to all the baptised
- Outreach to the wider community
- Outreach to youth
- Overseas priests
- Parish pastoral council
- Parishes involved in planning for the future
- Pray the Rosary
- Putting Gospel values in action
- Renewed call to holiness
- Share the faith with others
- Stronger parish communities
- Work together in unity
- Youth to be involved more in Church community

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“The Church in Australia is completely fragmented. Unify the approach for the future so that all priests and laity are ‘on the same page’.

At present, each diocese, and even each parish, follows its own rules, set by the bishop or, in some cases, the parish priest. The Church must come together in order to survive. Some parishes are very progressive in their thinking and practices, but others follow a very hard-line conservative approach”.

“Strengthen our practice as Christians through public worship and genuine assistance to the people seeking a loving relationship with Jesus. We need to reach people who are not inclined to attend established public worship”.

“To be not afraid in this time of the denial of God as God is always with us.

To pray, pray, pray. Prayer is the oxygen of the soul and without it we cannot be close to God. Bishops, priests and religious nuns should constantly encourage the faithful to pray the Rosary and to frequently spend time in Adoration of the Holy Eucharist. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is much neglected in these times and the faithful should be constantly urged by bishops and priests to return to the practice of monthly Reconciliation”.

“To serve Him and others. Love always and grow in love with others. Pray more. Live out the Gospel values. Increased discussions on bigger issues, e.g. poverty, abortion. The ability to discuss our beliefs with everyone. Practise what we preach and believe. Celebrate the greater things in life. Be appreciative of the gifts God gave each of us. Include and accept all cultures within our community. Remember that God loves us unconditionally. Take care of our environment”.

“To turn back to prayer in our daily lives.

To look for good in others, put them first, love our neighbour. We pray when we are in trouble, but must remember to thank God when our prayers are answered. Look after the elderly and sick in our parish.

To give back to them for their long service to our parish life. They may need someone to visit them and support them. This is a very worthwhile parish ministry to be encouraged.

To have some follow-up with parents who have attended the preparation classes for their children to receive the sacraments to encourage them to attend Sunday Mass in the future and join our parish life”.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Each day they met together in the Temple; they broke bread in their homes; they shared their food with great joy and sincerity of heart; they praised God and won the favour of all the people.”

(ACTS 2:42-47)

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 engage people to be members of their parish community?”

“How do we offer hope to the Catholic people of Australia?”

“How can we better integrate our many foreign-born priests into the Australian Church?”

“Are we willing to return to the simplicity and fidelity required to reawaken a love of God’s truth in the world?”

“Can liturgy be more a means of expression of what is happening in a community—joy, grief, forgiveness, etc.—rather than a rigid adherence to ‘ritual’ which is not always relevant to a situation or life-giving?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## EUGENIA

BRISBANE

**Some parishes are very welcoming as they know their community and are attentive to each other.** In this way, they practise charity and more people will be willing to engage in their activities. [At one parish] the parish council is aware of greeting newcomers, they organise a monthly morning tea with the community and celebrate special occasions together.



## JOHN

BRISBANE

**We enjoyed the RCIA journey and were confirmed at the Easter Vigil.** About 17 years later, I attended a Cursillo retreat and it also renewed my faith and helped me understand more about community. We are involved in a small Rosary group at the moment and the friendship and joy that has brought to me has been incredible. I am so glad that God brought me to the Church and that it was in the post-Vatican II era. The people really are the body of Christ along with all true believers.



## PATRICK

MELBOURNE

**I had a mother who had great faith which she received from her mother.** Their faith was sustained by Mass and the family Rosary. They attended state schools as they lived in a remote area. Mum could argue intelligently with any trained theologian as she had received a deep understanding of her faith from her mother. I witnessed the power of prayer and how often it is answered even when you think that there is no hope – almost miraculous – definitely astounding and very impressive. Mum used to say the Rosary will sustain your faith. I gave up the daily Rosary eventually. I then realised that my life just wasn't working. I went back to it and I have noticed an enormous improvement in almost every area. I suspect the Rosary requires things like faith, hope, trust, humility, self sacrifice and contemplation on the core moments of Gospels.



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/)



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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