

“To be a strong and faith-filled Catholic fraternity committed to serving our Church throughout Australia.”

Theme: Plenary Council 2020 – Six Categories Reflect Consultation

It is really quite astonishing to note that, at last count the Plenary Council Committee had received over 17,456 submissions (12,758 from individuals, and 4,699 from groups) and that over 220,000 people had participated in the initial consultation process. Those submissions have all been treated with respect and dignity and in order for them to be included, as much as possible, they have been ‘marshalled’ and ‘categorised’ so that they could be better managed. None were discarded or ignored and some submissions apply to more than one category. Out of that came six THEMES which have formed the skeleton for this next phase of discernment. Writing Groups have been assembled and are preparing working documents on each of the themes so that they can be more widely considered. These groups are still ‘at it’ but the results of that work will be ‘out there’ early in the new year.

Our vision statement encourages us to dedicate ourselves to serving the Church in Australia and one way is to understand what the Church’s needs are in Australia in this present age.

Step 1: Opening prayer: from the Order’s Prayers

Step 2: READINGS ON THE THEME

The Plenary Council website gives us this update:

“The six National Themes for Discernment are inspired by the data and call us toward the future. As we move into this second stage of preparation for the Plenary Council, we continue to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

In coming months, through the discernment process and drawing on the six National Themes for Discernment, we will develop the agenda for the first session of the Plenary Council.

This discernment process involves establishing Writing and Discernment Groups for each National Theme for Discernment while people in faith communities across Australia are called to participate locally in their own communal Listening and Discernment encounters and to send through their submissions to the Groups.

The fruits of what is discerned during this time will shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council in October 2020.”

The Themes identified are:

- A Church that is Christ-centred and is
- Missionary and Evangelising
- Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal
- Prayerful and Eucharistic
- Humble, Healing and Merciful
- A Joyful, hope-filled and servant community
- Open to conversion, renewal and reform.

In March 2018 the International Theological Commission released, after three years of study and research, a document “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church”. In the context of today’s happenings in the Australian Church, this document, while it is long and comprehensive, is very well worth the effort of our study. Synodality, as defined in this document, is “the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” In December 2019 the Holy Father addressed the Commission in these words: “I thank you for your document because today we think that doing synodality is joining hands and going for a walk, partying with the boys ... or doing a survey of opinions: ‘What do we think about the priesthood of women?’” he said. Pope Francis then stressed that “synodality is an ecclesial journey that has a soul that is the Holy Spirit.” “Without the Holy Spirit, there is no synodality,” he added.

Step 3: *Allow a few moments reflective silence.*

Step 4: SCRIPTURE READING

“So the Law was serving as a slave to look after us, to lead us to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But now that faith has come we are no longer under a slave looking after us; for all of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, since every one of you that has been baptised has been clothed in Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female – for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And simply by being Christ’s, you are that progeny of Abraham, the heirs named in the promise.” (Galatians 3: 24-29)

“With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all. On each one of us God’s favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ allotted it.” (Ephesians 4: 2-7)

Step 5: REFLECTION (5 Mins)

Step 6: SHARING (10 Mins)

In which of the Themes do I see my hopes for the future of the Church best expressed?
Which of the Themes present the greatest challenges for me?
Have I looked at the website for more information?

Step 7: CONCLUSION

We pray together;

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and enkindle in them the fire of your love.**

**V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.**

**Let us pray.
O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise
and ever to rejoice in His consolation.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Step 8: *The meeting proceeds*

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS – FROM THE ORDER’S PRAYERS