

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

Theme: Plenary Council 2020 – An historical Event in our Landscape

Everything these days seems to happen digitally and this brings benefits that previous generations did not have like improving communication and giving more people the chance to contribute and share their thoughts.

The last Plenary Council in Australia was held over 80 years ago. Even those of us who were born then would not have been old enough to know about it let alone contribute. So this is a new experience for us and many may find that difficult to manage. There is a website www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au that many will be familiar with and it should be visited regularly as part of our digital involvement.

As the website tells us: “A Plenary Council is the highest formal gathering of all local churches in a country. Our Plenary Council 2020 is being held so that we can dialogue about the future of the Catholic Church in Australia. There are many reasons for having a Plenary Council for the Catholic Church in Australia: Pope Francis has invited the local church to dialogue; the contemporary society of Australia has changed significantly, and the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse has been a significant and influential event that requires deep consideration and response.”

Many Knights – in their own groups, in parish meetings, and individual submissions – have already made a significant contribution. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to shape our landscape! A key word is “dialogue” and that essentially means participation.

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

Step 2: READINGS ON THE THEME

Pope Francis speaks about the need to engage in the world and to respond in faith when he said: “The defining aspect of this change of epoch is that things are no longer in their place. Our previous ways of explaining the world and relationships, good and bad, no longer appears to work. The way in which we locate ourselves in history has changed. Things we thought would never happen, or that we never thought we would see, we are experiencing now, and we dare not even imagine the future. That which appeared normal to us – family, the Church, society and the world – will probably no longer seem that way. We cannot simply wait for what we are experiencing to pass, under the illusion that things will return to being how they were before.”

When the Australian Bishops announced their decision to ask the Holy Father for a Plenary Council, Archbishop of Brisbane Mark Coleridge said that “the Church is not the presence in our society it once was. We need to take a measure of that and make decisions accordingly. The culture in which we have to proclaim the Gospel is very different to what it was even 20 or 30 years ago.”

The Plenary Council Website briefly addresses the theology behind the Council and, in part, tells us that: “Vatican II taught that the Church should be more dialogic and participatory in its processes, involving all the baptised in the Church. The council teaches that the whole Church has been given the gift of divine revelation, as well as the gift to interpret it faithfully. The bishops have a ministry of teaching that necessarily involves a process of listening to the voices of the faithful before they speak.

One of Pope Francis’ favourite quotes from Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*, 12) concerns how the bishops have access to the Holy Spirit, so that they are faithfully interpreting and applying what God has revealed and is revealing. And that access comes through a special gift that all the baptised have received at their baptism when they are anointed with chrism. That gift is called “a sense for the faith” (*sensus fidei*). Moreover, the whole church together has this special gift, what is called “the faithful’s sense of the faith” (*sensus fidelium*).”

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

Step 4: SCRIPTURE READING

[In the Book of Revelation there are messages addressed to the Seven Churches and each one includes the following exhortation]

Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. (Rev. 2: 7,11,17,29. 3:6,13,22)

This led to disagreement, and after Paul and Barnabas had had a long argument with these men it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and others of the church should go up to Jerusalem and discuss the question with the apostles and elders. The apostles and elders met to look into the matter, and after a long discussion, Peter stood up and addressed them. Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose delegates from among themselves to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas, known as Barsabbas, and Silas, both leading men in the brotherhood, and gave them this letter to take with them: "The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of gentile birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We hear that some people coming from here, but acting without any authority from ourselves, have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds; and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates, and to send them to you with our well-beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have committed their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who will confirm by word of mouth what we have written. It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to impose on you any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell". (Acts 15: 2, 6, 7, 22 – 29)

Step 5: REFLECTION (5 Mins)

Step 6: SHARING (10 Mins)

What am I expecting from the Plenary Council?
How can I continue to participate in the Plenary Council process?
How do I manage the different opinions and views expressed?

Step 7: CONCLUSION

We pray together;

Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost. Come, Holy Spirit of the great South Land.

O God, bless and unite all your people in Australia and guide us on the pilgrim way of the Plenary Council.

Give us the grace to see your face in one another and to recognise Jesus, our companion on the road.

Give us the courage to tell our stories and to speak boldly of your truth.

Give us ears to listen humbly to each other and a discerning heart to hear what you are saying.

Lead your Church into a hope-filled future, that we may live the joy of the Gospel.

**Through Jesus Christ our Lord, bread for the journey from age to age.
Amen.**

**Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary MacKillop, pray for us.**

Step 8: *The meeting proceeds*

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