

MEDIA RELEASE
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ST FRANCIS A MODEL FOR AUSTRALIA'S PLENARY COUNCIL

On the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, Bishop Shane Mackinlay has said the saint that so loved creation and those living in poverty can inspire the work of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia.

Bishop Mackinlay, the Bishop of Sandhurst and the Plenary Council's vice-president, celebrated Mass for the first day of the Council's program, a day after the historic event was opened by Council president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB.

Reflecting on the story of Francis as a young man, hearing Jesus invite him to "rebuild my Church", Bishop Mackinlay said the saint's initial inclination to repair a building gave way to an understanding that the Church of Christ was in need of renewal.

Bishop Mackinlay said in his homily: "During this Plenary Council, we too are seeking to rebuild Christ's Church, responding in a very concrete way to Pope Francis' repeated call for us to become a more synodal church: a Church committed to journeying together in reciprocal listening to one another, listening to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, and most importantly listening to the Holy Spirit; a Church which gives witness to the Christian vision of community, participation, solidarity and joint responsibility."

Bishop Mackinlay continued to connect the life of St Francis and the recent teaching of Pope Francis, including in his encyclical letters *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

"The work of renewing our Church and being more faithful to the mission entrusted to us requires that we always bear in mind not only the needs of our Church life and structures, but also the needs and challenges being faced by all our sisters and brothers, and our responsibilities to the common home that we are entrusted with caring for," he said.

"As St Francis was called to rebuild Christ's Church, may we during this Plenary Council be inspired, encouraged and renewed by his vision and commitment, to turn again towards all our sisters and brothers, as stewards together of God's extraordinary creation. In this way, may we in this time work to 'create a more missionary, Christ-centred Church in Australia'."

The Mass Bishop Mackinlay celebrated can be viewed on [the Plenary Council YouTube channel](#).

In an interview with *Plenary Podcast* on Sunday evening, Bishop Mackinlay spoke about how the work of discernment the Plenary Council's 278 members are undertaking was drawing some people outside their comfort zones.

"We're all much more used to thinking about 'what do I want?'," he said. "And it's taking all of us a lot of practice, a lot of trust in the presence of the Spirit in this process, to move from that to the question that we are actually asked, which is not what do I want, or what do most people want - it's what does God want? What is the Church in Australia being called to?"

The first general assembly's opening plenary session, at which all members gather together in an online environment, commences at 11am AEDT. The session will include a number of key addresses, including from Archbishop Costelloe and Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge.

A livestream session of about 75 minutes will commence at 11am each day of the six-day first general assembly, except Thursday.

Find out more and access the livestreams at www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au

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