



**Plenary Council**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

# **FIRST ASSEMBLY PROPOSALS FROM SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

DECEMBER 2021





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# *A Message From the President*

For more than three years (some would say for much longer than that), the Church in Australia has been preparing for the celebration of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia. It has been a journey of listening, dialogue and discernment which has provided the opportunity for all of us to explore the practice of 'synodality' and learn by doing.

The celebration of the Plenary Council began with the commencement of the First Assembly on Sunday October 3rd 2021 in St Mary's Cathedral, Perth. Over the following week, nearly 280 members from across Australia gathered online with observers and theological advisors, in plenary sessions and in small groups.

This was an inspiring, challenging and sometimes unsettling week for many of us. Above all, it was a Spirit-filled week of discernment and reflection as we explored together possible ways of re-casting ourselves, re-positioning ourselves, the Church in Australia, for our mission of becoming more fully a clear, unambiguous, and effective sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all people.

I am very pleased to present the fruits of that discernment to Members and to the Catholic community. This draws together the proposals that emerged from the small groups that met each day, along with formal proposals submitted by individual Members. As much as possible, what follows retains the original voice of those who spoke, without attempts to produce a harmonised or homogenous account.

Plenary Council Members will have an opportunity to engage with these proposals at 'coffee conversations' during December. I encourage the wider Catholic community to consider these proposals as a significant indication of our local context when participating in the local consultation currently underway for the 2023 Synod 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission', which has the fundamental question: How is the 'journeying together' to announce the Gospel happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our 'journeying together'? (visit [www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch](http://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch))

Further reflection on these proposals is already underway, to identify thematic focuses for propositions that might be developed for consideration by the Second Assembly in July 2022. This work will be coordinated by the Council's Drafting Committee, drawing on a range of theologians and other contributors.

As initial drafts of propositions become available, they will be shared with Members, Advisors and other Church and Agency leaders for ongoing discernment and feedback. In this way, the writing process will be informed and guided by the ongoing prayer, conversation and discernment of the Members and the wider people of God in Australia.

The Australian bishops will gather for their regular biannual meeting in May and will have a particular focus on the progress in drafting propositions for the Plenary Council. Following this meeting, the Drafting Committee will work towards a final version of the propositions. These propositions will form the agenda for the Second Assembly, which is expected to be published in June, so that Members have an opportunity to reflect on the various documents and to prepare responses that can be presented at the Second Assembly, where there will be further discussion and spiritual conversation, leading to the final discernment and voting.

I am very grateful that during this First Assembly, the Members of the Plenary Council have been accompanied by the prayers of our brothers and sisters in the community of faith who are looking to us with so much hope. We are very mindful of all those who have trusted us to carry their hopes and dreams with us. I am confident that we will continue to walk together as we share our experience of the First Assembly and as we reflect together on the ever present and pressing question: what do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

As we enter into our preparation for the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council, I offer the same thought I shared in my Opening Address for the First Assembly: The Lord Jesus is always with us; he remains faithful and true; and he says to us as he said to his first disciples: take courage, I am with you, do not be afraid.

**Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB**

President of the Plenary Council

# *The Journey So Far*

## Concluding Statement from the First General Assembly

As we conclude the First General Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, the process of discernment continues. From the opening Mass to the closing of the Assembly, our prayer has been 'Come, Holy Spirit.' The call to hear afresh the Good News of Jesus Christ through a spiritual posture of 'deep listening' has been a central element of the preparation of the Plenary process and a distinctive feature of this week. We adopted a regular pattern of prayer and spiritual conversation throughout each day. This slow process of deep listening allowed space for still nascent dreams and visions to come to greater maturity.

The opening session each day began with a Welcome to Country, spoken from various regions of Australia. Indigenous voices, both young and old, paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging, welcomed the Members of the Plenary Council to the day's gathering, and invited all of us to a time of quiet and prayer. As Members offered their reflections day by day, they regularly acknowledged the Indigenous peoples of the land from which they were speaking.

Over three hundred participants gathered for six days, meeting virtually across five different time zones, with many more people following the opening session of each day online. The gift of listening to one another has planted promising seeds and raised important questions for us. Many described the small group conversations and reports as the heartbeat of this First Assembly. Our process of discernment requires time and space for mature reflections to emerge, and further spiritual conversations will be necessary in our considerations of what God is asking of us in Australia at this time.

As the many personal interventions demonstrated, there is no shortage of passion and charisms among the community of believers. These interventions covered a wide range of the complex realities of the Church and Australian society in this particular moment of our history. They expressed personal wisdom and aspirations that have been a gift to this Assembly's deliberations. Many elements of the Council's Agenda were carefully considered. Discussion of other issues, including some not formally on the Agenda, was initiated, and will require more time.

As participants in this Assembly, we have experienced and expressed the range of emotions

that come with facing profound issues together, holding in tension diverse interpretations and expectations. Through prayer and reflection, we have been called to be patient with the process, with each other, with the Church and, most importantly, with the Holy Spirit.

We listened to the confronting and important voices of victims and survivors of abuse in the Church. They reminded us of the great wounds and failures of the Church and the continuing need to discern pathways of true healing and renewal.

The plain speaking of First Nations people has brought into even sharper focus the need for reconciliation with Indigenous communities, as well as the need for justice and for the healing of this land itself through an 'integral ecology'.

In responding to the Agenda questions, we considered ways of living as Church today. Many affirmed what they value about their Catholic faith: spirituality, community, prayer, liturgy and sacramental life, and service through the vocation of all the baptised. Members spoke of the ministries of pastoral care and education, health and aged care, and the many social services and advocacy the Church provides in the Australian community. These are great gifts to a world that is seeking meaning and more authentic living.

Other interventions expressed hopes for renewal, offering perspectives on what might be possible for a Church facing crucial questions, tensions and uncertainties. Many called our attention to the importance of enhancing the role of women in the Church. We heard the call to conversion and fidelity, as well as to imagination and renewal. We were reminded of the needs of rural dioceses and parishes, as well as those of large cities. We celebrated the gifts that the Eastern Churches bring to the Catholic community in Australia.

Often expressed through the lens of personal experience, the discernment of this Assembly has threaded together conversations about what the Church can offer today's world on the one hand, and how the world can inform the ways and structures of the Church on the other. We reflected on questions of leadership and governance in light of Pope Francis' call for us to be more synodal.

The missionary vision of Pope Francis has both inspired and infused all the deliberations of this First Assembly. Missionary discipleship has been a key theme, as has the call to go out to the margins. Another recurring theme, expressed in different ways, is the need for ongoing processes of ecclesial listening which can form and inform how the Church lives its mission today.

The Assembly also considered how all people might feel at home in our communities, regardless of their particular circumstances. Various voices drew our attention to young people, women, single people, parents and families, people with disabilities, people with diverse experience of sexuality and gender, and others who feel, for a variety of reasons, that there is no place for them. We asked

how a missionary Church might connect with those who feel distant from the community of faith.

Each of these voices has been a powerful reminder that the Church, as a sign of the kingdom of God, has the vocation of being an image of Christ and an icon of grace to the whole human family.

With the closing of this First Assembly, the Plenary Council process now enters a time of prayer, reflection, maturation and development. This will involve continuing reflection by the Members of the Council, and consultation with the wider Church community, as we develop propositions for presentation to the Second Assembly of the Council next July. This will be coordinated with Australian preparations for the 2023 Synod, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*.

In faith, hope and charity, we entrust all these tasks to the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer remains, as always: 'Come, Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit of the great South Land.'

**9 OCTOBER 2021**

# Introduction

This report gathers the proposals made at the First General Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia together with areas identified for further consideration. It is organised according to the agenda questions for the Assembly. Fourteen of the questions were assigned to small groups for consideration via spiritual conversations while two questions were considered by all Members together. There were also opportunities for individual Members to make interventions. Proposals arose from both spiritual conversations of the small groups and the interventions of individual members.

Each section begins with the final report of the small group tasked with considering the question and then identifies any areas for further consideration in relation to the question nominated by any of the small groups. Next any formal proposals relating to the question, moved, and seconded by members and submitted via the submission form are presented. These have been given numbers for ease of reference. For questions two and four, which were considered by all the Members together, extracts from interventions by Members that include proposals are presented so that these proposals are also included in this report.



## Question One:

How might we better accompany one another on the journey of personal and communal conversion which mission in Australia requires?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

- Constant exhortation for individuals to intentionally take up, daily, the mission of Baptism as the principal place for conversion; personal conversion to **God the Father** who has shown divine compassion in **Jesus Christ**. This is the key to future renewal. It begins with the **personal** conversion, renewal and reform for mission through Christ, who through his **Holy Spirit** leads us together to **communal** and **ecclesial** conversion, renewal and reform for mission at all levels.
- In the words of Scripture, we seek to experience God's love more deeply through a **new Pentecost**, as a personal conversion and renewal of our Baptism and Confirmation.
- **Conversion, Metanoia** can be described as a turn towards God, humanity, and all creation, with compassion, tenderness, and healing. It happens by walking alongside (accompanying) others, based on the three Christian virtues: faith, hope and love.
- Are we open to the conversion on offer by God through the world? When the Church comes down from the mountain and lives in the world, it can access what God in the world is seeing and trying to teach us.
- This exchange through mutual dialogue and listening to the stories of people challenges us; **conversion** is mutual, it flows both ways.
- We embrace the journey of learning to become a compassionate, welcoming, and loving community (being non-judgmental in the sense that we reserve judgement of others for Christ alone).
- This involves listening to the experience of others; especially encounters with those on the peripheries, with whom we are not comfortable, and the voices of those who are missing leads us as individuals and communities to a place of conversion ("on the fringes we

encounter Christ” Pope Francis, *Call to Holiness 135*). This includes deep listening to people who have been hurt, abused, or excluded in the Church.

- As Church we need to tend to our own past and current sins/failures, seek forgiveness: we are on a mission of contrition. This may be shameful and humbling but offers the option of new life. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a concrete expression of God’s mercy.
- In the experience of others’ pain and our woundedness we live the Paschal mystery – the suffering, dying and resurrection of Jesus.
- To understand **conversion**, we consider a renewed understanding of sin and evil leading to forgiveness and grace. This is to make sure that conversion reflects justice to the vulnerable.
- A humble Church knows it holds the treasure but is not itself the treasure. The Church is constantly on a journey of **conversion**, involving a change of heart, mind, and concrete actions.
- We are invited to study and learn with our Indigenous brothers and sisters as they continue their synodal journey to and from the *Uluru Statement of the Heart*, and take action to continue resolving the "unfinished business" of **reconciliation** in this country.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- How do we be Church today?

#### **CONTEXT**

In the analysis of the culture, we need to affirm the positive and identify opportunities in our culture. Authenticity is part of our new age (ethic of authenticity). Culture can open doors for us by acknowledging that we are pilgrims. The working group proposal is that expert input is needed e.g. a sociologist to inform the roadmap going forward.

Sharing and reflecting this week emphasised **contemplation and prayer**. But prayer is also about mission so perhaps we are missing something of the mission part.

## PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

### ▶ PROPOSAL 1

#### *AFFIRM THE CHURCH'S TEACHINGS ON HUMAN SEXUALITY*

That the Plenary Council clearly affirm the Church's teaching on human **sexuality**, in particular that it recognise that people's lives can change in response to Gospel teaching about human sexuality. Such change is a sign of the power of Christ's resurrection.

#### BACKGROUND

We are called to celebrate the Church. Many of the answers that we seek are found in the Gospels and the Church's teaching. They liberate us and provide us with the healing love that we need.

### ▶ PROPOSAL 2

#### *SUPPORT FOR THE DOMESTIC CHURCH*

In recognition that there are increasing pressures on families trying to raise their children in the Catholic faith, that the Plenary Council of Australia acknowledges the family as the **domestic Church** and recommends that the Church in Australia provides support to families in ways such as:

- Providing resources for family prayer, including the development of 'online learning' tools for young people in the faith;
- Increasing opportunities for liturgies for families, including Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and other prayers;
- Providing support for those whose marriages are in difficulty;
- Having a ministry for those who have obligations as carers, including for children with disabilities and parents; and
- Having a ministry for those struggling with infertility or miscarriage or postnatal depression.

#### BACKGROUND

Family life is at the centre of our culture, and it is increasingly under attack. We have heard from so many who want this Council to focus on the domestic Church and so we would like their voices to be heard.

### ► PROPOSAL 3

#### **EVANGELISATION TO LAY MEN IN AUSTRALIA**

1. A Statement from the ACBC affirming the importance of lay men's involvement in the Church and the essential role of fatherhood in the spiritual lives of their children.
2. The Council commit to supporting the evangelisation of lay men and affirm the needs of mental and spiritual support through local and national gatherings.
3. Establish a National Taskforce to research and provide strategies to support lay men and fatherhood.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The role of fathers in passing on the faith to their children is fundamental. Lay men however only make up one third of our congregations in the Catholic Church. Many young men are turning away from the faith and are identifying as not practising. This will be a huge crisis for our Church in coming years as we will have less vocations as well as less practising families. Lay men are the smallest minority in the life of our Church today. If we are looking at raising the practising rates of all Catholics, this is where we should start.

### ► PROPOSAL 4

#### **WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES**

**That** Australia hosts the **World Meeting of Families**.

#### **BACKGROUND**

It has been made clear through the duration of the Council the need for the Church to have specific focus on families. After discussions many delegates feel that there needs to be more formation opportunities available to families. I was blessed to be able to see the flow-on effect that World Youth Day 2008 had on the life of the Church in Australia and I feel now is time to be able to allow the Holy Spirit to be able, enlighten us once again through the avenue of family life. I propose that the Council and the Australia Bishops consider hosting the **World Meeting of Families** as a way of **evangelisation and catechesis**.

## ► PROPOSAL 5

### MARRIAGE CATECHUMENATE

That parish communities work towards establishing a **marriage catechumenate** that accompanies couples from the time of discernment of marriage, through the engagement period, and into the newlywed years.

That, whenever practical, couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church be supported in their formation by their parish community (including their parish priest and, if possible, a married couple sponsor), irrespective of the venue for the wedding or the residence of celebrant, so that support into the newlywed years can be more readily provided.

#### BACKGROUND

The Plenary is called to address itself to matters of morals. Following 46 years of no-fault divorce marriage and society is now in a moral crisis concerning relationships. The catechumenate is one means by which we can support marriage. Pope Francis and the Synods on the Family called for the formation of couples prior to marriage to be strengthened and extended into the newlywed years:

“That is why I repeat the need for a **permanent catechumenate for the Sacrament of Marriage**, which concerns its preparation, the celebration and the first years that follow.” Pope Francis, Sept 27, 2018, St John Lateran

Also, please see *Instrumentum Laboris*, n. 61.

## ► PROPOSAL 6

### NEW ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES AND MOVEMENTS

That the Plenary Council affirms the role of the **new ecclesial communities and movements** in providing some of the energies previously provided by religious orders in Australia.

#### BACKGROUND

As a long-standing member of a lay Catholic community, I have experienced the ability of the **new ecclesial communities** and movements to contribute to the renewal of the Church, and answer to the pressing needs of current contexts, particularly in regard to families, young people and the call to evangelise.

## ► PROPOSAL 7

### CALL FOR NATIONAL ACTION FOR 10TH WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES JUNE 2022

That every diocese, parish, **Catholic Education** department, faith community and movement where possible, and in whichever form appropriate, take up Pope Francis' call to prepare for and host a meeting for the upcoming **10th World Meeting of Families**.

The **10th World Meeting of Families** will take place from 22-26 June 2022. The theme chosen by Pope Francis for this event is: "Family love: a vocation and a path to holiness."

This will be a wonderful way to conclude the "Amoris Laetitia Family Year" and a concrete action from this Plenary Council. This would directly relate to *Instrumentum Laboris* n59-62.

#### BACKGROUND

There has been a resounding call by the Holy Spirit to better form, support and accompany our domestic church in this Plenary Council, of which I strongly feel compelled to have direct action from. This could be a concrete action that can be worked on in every parish, diocese, education office, to be celebrated in whatever media/form just before we re-convene for the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council.

## ► PROPOSAL 8

### MEN'S MINISTRY

Men have gone missing in the Church and in families. Therefore recognition needs to be given to assist men in developing their roles as Catholic husbands, fathers and contributors to the life and mission of the Church. To this end support be given to the various expressions of **Men's Ministry** now in Australia.

#### BACKGROUND

Men have gone missing in the Church and families and there is a need to call them forth.

## Question Two

How might we heal the wounds of abuse, coming to see through the eyes of those who have been abused?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

This question was considered by the whole Assembly rather than by a particular small group.

### AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS

The theme of **Safeguarding**, listening to the voice of the child and the **Theology of the Child** was identified as an essential component of Catholic education - a need for continual vigilance to ensure all children are treated with respect, dignity and care. Theology that captures each child being made in the image and likeness of God. That Jesus “placed a child in their midst” highlights the value and importance of child-centred care and our call to deep listening to the voice of children and young people.

### PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

#### ► PROPOSAL 9

#### **BRINGING HEALING TO THE CRISIS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

The Plenary Council acknowledges the pain of all those who have been wounded by the crime of abuse within the Catholic community in Australia and recommends that every diocese create a permanent and public installation expressing its lament and sorrow for the occasions of sexual abuse, and that a national centre be established through Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd that explores the best practice for welcoming and healing those who have suffered abuse.

## BACKGROUND

For the healing of all those who have suffered abuse within our community.

### ► PROPOSAL 10

#### *STATEMENT IN RELATION TO THE ABUSED AND MARGINALISED*

On Thursday, 7 October, during the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church of Australia, the entire Council devoted its time to thinking of and praying for all those it has **marginalised**. The Council's thoughts and prayers turned to our Indigenous brothers and sisters, to all those who have suffered abuse of any form, to the marginalisation of women, the divorced, the LGBTIQA community and more.

The Plenary Council experienced a lament of those it has **marginalised** and heard some of the **personal stories** of those who have suffered from this **marginalisation**.

All the members of the Plenary Council wish to express their profound sorrow for this abuse and marginalisation and humbly beg forgiveness from all those whom the Church has hurt.

The Plenary Council also wishes to express that it is totally committed to ensuring, first and foremost, the safety of all in the Church and our Australian society and that the sins of the past will never be experienced again. The Plenary Council is also committed to putting in place concrete ways as to how our Church can express its deep love, care, and inclusion for all whom she comes into contact with.

## BACKGROUND

To express that we have heard, experienced and are responding to this issue.

### ► PROPOSAL 11

#### *HEALING THE WOUNDS OF ABUSE*

Over these days we have heard impassioned pleas to listen, to listen to the voices of those who are missing from our Churches, those who feel alienated and excluded. We have heard brave truth-telling and we have carried in our hearts the pain of one another.

Pope Francis reminds us that we are a people who have forgotten how to weep. This is our sackcloth and ashes moment to weep and walk with those most wounded and abused, particularly those wounded and abused by our Church: victims of sexual abuse, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, divorced Catholics, women, members of the LGBTGIA+ community, and others.

We have heard stories of people who do not feel at home in our Church, who feel judged and alienated. If we are called to be the Heart of God on Earth, we need to show a magnanimity of spirit, a love that welcomes and embraces all.

We say we walk in solidarity with our abused and wounded sisters and brothers and so perhaps the call is to 'walk' together. I am proposing that we explore ways to 'do' sorry by having a 'BIG' whole Church apology and lament, a sorry that roars across our Great South Land. This sorry could take the form of a nationwide silent walk. I also propose we **consult and dialogue with those abused** by our Church and our Indigenous brothers and sisters who are the experts on 'sorry business' to determine the most appropriate symbols and rituals to use in a nationwide lament.

## BACKGROUND

Some people who are no longer affiliated with the Church say they feel excluded and alienated from the Church because of abuse in all forms. Our Catholic brothers and sisters are hurting. Over the past months as I have prayerfully prepared for this assembly and during this Assembly I continually see the faces of victims, crying out for public action that says to the Australian people we, the Church are sorry and we lament and by our actions we witness to the words Pope John Paul II spoke to the Australian people in 1986, 'Come back... Jesus loves you.'

## ► PROPOSAL 12

### **AFFIRMATION OF PRIESTS IN FACE OF SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS**

While recognising firstly the immense suffering of survivors of child sexual abuse, that the Plenary Council affirm the clergy as men of faith and pastoral commitment who have devoted their lives to serving the People of God and who find themselves operating under the shadow of the sins of their brethren who have perpetrated the sexual abuse of minors.

## BACKGROUND

Many priests currently struggle under the burden of the revelations of child sexual abuse.

## ► PROPOSAL 13

### **FRIDAY PENANCE IN REPARATION FOR THE SINS COMMITTED IN SEXUAL ABUSE**

That the Bishops of Australia re-introduce **No Meat Fridays** for every Friday in the year in reparation for the sins committed by the Church in response to sexual abuse. This Catholic practice is one that can be done nationally by drawing our attention to a spirit of prayer and bodily penance in response to the hurt caused by the Church to children.

## BACKGROUND

The Church has lacked any public form of Penance in response to child sexual abuse and we need a **Penance** that will last for a life time. No Meat Fridays will ensure that Catholics nationally can do their bit to make reparation for the sins of the Church here in Australia.

## PROPOSALS IN INTERVENTIONS BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

What is the Plenary Council going to say to the people who have been wounded by the Church? There are victims of abuse and many others who have been traumatised and suffer from depression. There are also those who have been hurt in other ways. It will be important to speak to them directly.

We need to recognise the permanent harm caused by paedophilia, and so recognise it as intrinsically evil and immoral, and we need to legislate to classify it as an excommunicable offence.

The only genuine way forward for us is to break the silence and sit before the stories of trauma, to encourage the stories to be told – not just in the anonymity and obscurity of mediation rooms, but in the sanctuaries and in the seminaries. In other words, not privately but publicly. What might occur if we, as a whole Church, were truly prepared to “sit with” and listen deeply to the pain of stories and to wonder in the encounter with such pain might act as the catalyst for theology, and for our self-understanding as Church? How does people’s pain shape our sense of God, of Christ, of redemption? As a Church we are not used to listening; we are used to proclaiming. We are not used to asking questions; we are used to giving the answers. Yet, in encouraging the stories of those who have been traumatised, we, too, must tell our own story of being wounded, and in the telling discover that solidarity with suffering from which alone the God of our Scriptures is known.

Apologies are important. But what survivors want is action. Our dioceses, schools, congregations, seminaries and houses of formation, Professional Standards Offices, National Catholic Centre for Professional Standards, Catholic Professional Standards Ltd, Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd, Towards Healing, Truth, Justice and Healing--all have done a lot. Administratively we might close the file. For the survivors, the file is never closed. So, what we must do, along with everything else, is to continue to be present, be available, be heartfelt and humble, be sorrowful and be silent – to make a space where survivors know they are safe, understood and loved no matter how awkward and angry they can be. No matter how angry and bitter.

Unless we make a fervent, generous, heartfelt response to those who have been harmed and wounded by the Church, I fear our efforts and resolutions in other areas will not get traction, and risk ongoing failure. ... We have SAID sorry, but we need to SHOW sorry. We need to DO sorry.

We are a sacramental, tangible, incarnational Church. We need to find a grounded, palpable, concrete, demonstrative way to show our sorry, express our lament and open up our welcome to those who have survived sexual abuse at the hand of the Church ... and to seek inspiration from the Holy Spirit to find a new way to express our lament and sorrow to the survivors of sexual abuse.

**Repentance** ... I have been privileged to be in a room where a Bishop has stood before many young people and quite simply said sorry for the wrongs of many people in the Church. One simple word with such power ... we must first repent, for in the experience of forgiving we are transformed and led to Christ. How can we more openly repent for the wrongs of those within our midst?

One element of our response [to the catastrophe of sexual abuse] that would take us across the threshold could be to found or convene such a community [as was done with religious orders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century]. **A new kind of community of consecrated people**, including all the baptised-lay, religious, priests, and that this group would acquire an expertise within this area of dealing with abuse survivors and be a vanguard or spearhead for this ministry. ... A community dedicated exclusively to this extraordinary and complex ministry.

What about wrongly accused priests? They can be left feeling abandoned by their brothers, congregations, bishops, leaders. They don't know who to turn to. Who can they turn to?

People who've been affected by the sexual abuse crisis often don't turn to us. So, what do we do? Until we turn our eyes away from our own guilt and shame, I don't think God will be working in it. I think we should be doing things that should be available for anyone who has been abused in Australia. Otherwise, what we do won't be recognised as a Gospel response.

Some of what we need to do will need to be by gestures and symbols. Art and beauty are some ways to overcome that. I was moved when I went to the Children's Memorial at the Holocaust Museum [Yad Vashem in Israel]. I wonder if we need to do something similar, build a monument or a shrine? Do we need a shrine to hold on to this 'Lest we Forget' moment? Do we need symbols, and possibly a shrine, to remind us of the victims and to keep this eternally in front of us?

The theological problem is **why did this happen** within the Church? What does the reality of the sexual abuse crisis say about our faith and the practice of it? ... And this crisis of faith is because we are not living up to what we proclaim.

We need to consider **why** and **how** it happened in our Church and how our theology and pastoral practice contributed. If priests are regarded as "other Christs" we may have a clue. If bishops claim authority to teach morals yet couldn't make moral decisions, we have another. We need better accounts of who we are as Church and ministers.

While that must go on, and professional standards imposed to ensure, as far as possible, it never happens again, there are many suffering people around us right now. I have seen the benefit small

listening groups can do and believe the Church could encourage such groups in parishes and other Church communities.

We need to passionately oppose domestic violence, rape, and pornography as passionately as we oppose abortion and contraception.

Now is the time to reach out to the victims of child sexual abuse to support them so they are able to forgive and to experience healing.

What about the perpetrator, the paedophile? ... Could we, the Church, put resources towards research into determining why such abhorrent behaviour exists in some people? Perhaps we can find a way to break the intergenerational cycle of child sexual abuse.

That the language of God in all documents, homilies and utterings of our Church be **inclusive**. The exclusively naming of God as male makes it very difficult for male and female victims and their families. Let us reject the exclusive language that can offend, even the statement in the Creed, "for us men and our salvation"; this can be changed.

That the Rite of Reconciliation be offered in its third form while we, as Church, are in this crisis, to enable people who have been abused, and their families, and those who perceive danger in the ranks of the clergy, to receive this sacrament. This would be a true indication of compassion in its pastoral care of all who have suffered or perceive the suffering of others with fear. This will require great compassion from our faithful clergy.

An important exercise that cannot be overlooked is the successes in our history, which is evidence of the Spirit's accompaniment and our response to the urging of the Spirit. We have reflected on the scandal of sexual abuse in the Church in Australia, but have we discerned the Spirit's action over the last twenty-five years in prompting and guiding our response - our pastoral endeavours to care for the victims/survivors, to assist them with compassion, justice, and material assistance; to make our people more accountable and our protection of the vulnerable more adequate? To discern the public criticism of the Church, to identify the good and the bad spirits at work.

Before we establish a body or community it is crucial then that we first speak with survivors and their families and ask them what they want. It is then imperative that any solution or strategy is co-designed with them and then implemented collaboratively.

Make 2022 '**The Year of Contrition**' for the Church in Australia. Eucharistic liturgies begin with the Penitential Rite.

A Commission for Healing and Compassion.

Establish a **National Day of Lament and Atonement** for those the Australian Church has wronged.

A service outside or in other facilities [than a church] where we acknowledge and remember the mistakes of our past and recommit every year to never let this happen again. We can learn from Anzac Day services, Reconciliation Week and other national ceremonies and services. We could connect with different groups we have hurt; we could hold a **Pilgrimage Walk of Sorrow**.

## Question Three:

**How might the Church in Australia open in new ways to Indigenous ways of being Christian in spirituality, theology, liturgy, and missionary discipleship? How might we learn from the First Nations peoples?**

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

John Paul II visited Alice Springs in 1986 addressed the people stating: “You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”

In our group’s discernment, we believe that the Spirit has been saying that it is long past the time for our Church to acknowledge and receive fully the gift of that contribution.

In our discernment throughout the first assembly, we heard the Spirit saying:

- our Church will be enlivened with a full participation of **First Nations Peoples**;
- that we acknowledge and celebrate the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council** for its leadership and ministry across our Church;
- there is a need for Aboriginal people to be able to minister to their communities and to each other;
- can we help the nation do something to give place to First Nations peoples in both urban and country communities?
- being Indigenous and being Catholic are not two separate ways of being; they are two elements of spirituality that exist side-by-side for First Nations peoples within our Church community.
- there is an authentic point of connection for us all in the life of Jesus, in the experience of suffering, in our vulnerability, in the call to see the Spirit in each other and in the desire to be at home in our Church;

- the words of the Our Father – in whatever language we use – call us into relationship and connect us to culture, tradition and faith. The prayer is a type of ‘Songline’ for us, showing us who we are and leading us to reconciliation, forgiveness and boldness;
- the *Missa Kimberley* is approved, established and loved as a culturally appropriate liturgy;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including women, could receive formation in the ministry of preaching;
- engaging with and reaching out to unaffiliated youth in Indigenous communities needs further consideration;
- common prayer – in language – connects us with our shared identity;
- a mutuality of initiation and exchange between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics and others enriches our faith community.

### ► SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

The following proposals emerged from our discernment:

- ***The Uluru Statement from the Heart***: It is recommended that an appropriate process be determined for our Church to support the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. A First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata that would undertake a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history is important for our nation. It is suggested that the advice of Periti, Rev Prof Frank Brennan SJ AO and Prof Greg Craven AO, would assist in shaping this recommendation.
- **NATSICC Submission**: The five recommendations outlined in the NATSICC submission to the Plenary Council should be received and acted upon. The recommendations are the result of extensive consultation and listening to Indigenous people. They suggest practical actions for our Church as follows:
  - Cultural awareness training to be undertaken by clergy, religious and lay workers to enable more effective and appropriate ministry.
  - Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake formation training.
  - Creating a Welcoming Space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The use of symbols and rituals in the Catholic liturgical context facilitate a welcoming environment for Indigenous peoples.
  - Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians of the land prominently and appropriately; verbal acknowledgement prior to meetings and Mass is also encouraged.

- Inclusion and consultation using the gifts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on committees, boards and decision-making bodies.

## NOTES

- That the formation needs of women who can minister in their communities – on Country – is considered to be particularly important.
- The need to consider ways of connecting with and nurturing Catholic men in Indigenous communities.
- The power of art, music, songs and dance as a way of making liturgies and places of worship more welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; as a point of connection for people of faith; the use of symbol in connection to preaching; art as a starting point for evangelisation.
- Note and affirm the resources already made available to parishes and communities by NATSICC on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday and the resources provided for those who don't yet have Indigenous connections locally. A national approach for such celebrations is valued.
- The connection with Q8-10 (Formation). We stress the importance of formation that enables priests and deacons to be culturally prepared for their ministry in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. All priests in Australia, particularly those new to our country, should undertake thorough preparation/induction and ongoing formation for this ministry.
- The Inclusion of Indigenous Leaders as Partners in Decision Making: It is recommended that the gifts of First Nations Catholics should be fully embraced through the inclusion of Indigenous leaders as partners in decision-making at every level of Church – parishes, dioceses, Catholic education, organisations, and agencies.
- The respectful relationship between the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) and the Bishops Commission for Relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples provides a model for this. Indigenous leadership already embodies partnership, listening, respect and relationship. This can be a model for all Catholic organisations.
- The connection with Q14 (Recasting Governance) and the importance of strengthening governance with the respectful inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The connection with Q15 (Catholic Education) and the need for deliberate inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decision-making and leadership with education.

- **Reconciliation Action Plans:** It is recommended that the contributions and concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics should be acted upon in relation to Reconciliation Action Plans for parishes, dioceses, Catholic education, organisations and agencies.

Note: The connection with all three formation questions. We stress the need for deliberate formation to increase understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all priests and other leaders (particularly new to Australia/regions) – sit back and learn about the culture we are entering.

- **A National Acknowledgement, Statement and Monument and/or Action towards Healing:** It is recommended that a process be developed for acknowledging the failures of the Church in her treatment of and relationship with First Nations peoples and for making a gesture toward healing for those who have experienced trauma, woundedness and suffering. A process of accompaniment towards healing could reflect the stages of a pilgrimage of understanding such that the pilgrimage becomes an act of solidarity and a process of spiritual growth and engagement.
- **Use our Catholic Voice to Heal Society:** Since the integrity of both Church and society in Australia is intimately connected to the wellbeing and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it is recommended that the collective influence and voice of Catholics be used to change the structures that lead to horrific injustice, trauma and suffering for First Nations peoples in society. Our collective voice to influence government policy and structures could be very significant.

Note: The interconnectedness of all the questions around Conversion (Q1-5). How might we influence change in the social structures that diminish, demonise and dehumanise people?

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- A strong connection between Q3 and Q 5 (**Ecological Conversion**). A “Theology of the land” may be worthwhile considering. The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is intimately linked with land. In order for Aboriginal spirituality to be fully expressed, an understanding of and connection to Country is essential.
- A strong connection between our desire as a faith community to become more contemplative and the spirituality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- There is a need to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities – and the parishes, schools and agencies that engage with them – with appropriate resources

to enable their full participation in Church and society. Limitations around personnel, funding, physical and capital resources currently restrict the supports that can be made available, particularly in regional, rural, and remote areas.

## Question Four:

How might the Church in Australia meet the needs of the most vulnerable, go to the peripheries, be missionary in places that may be overlooked or left behind in contemporary Australia? How might we partner with others (Christians, people of other faiths, neighbourhood community groups, government) to do this?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

This question was considered by the whole Assembly rather than by a particular small group.

### PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

#### ▶ PROPOSAL 14

#### *RESISTING THE MARCH OF EUTHANASIA*

That the Catholic Church in Australia recognises the recent passage of **voluntary assisting dying** legislation in most Australian jurisdictions as a great challenge: for the evangelisation of culture, for the catechising of the faithful and for the provision of the best possible care to the elderly, sick and dying. We commit ourselves to resisting as far as possible the likely extension in the years ahead of the objects of this legislation beyond the terminally ill to others who are chronically sick, have psychological or existential issues, are disabled, unconscious, infants etc.

#### BACKGROUND

Euthanasia is now legal in most Australian states.

#### ▶ PROPOSAL 15

#### *ANTI-SLAVERY*

That in keeping with the strong teaching of Pope Francis and the Sustainable Development Goals 8.7, the Catholic Church in Australia commits to making its best contribution to the eradication

of modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030. In particular, all dioceses, schools, hospitals and agencies will ensure that their procurement policies exclude goods and services tainted with slavery.

## BACKGROUND

This is an important priority area for Pope Francis.

### ► PROPOSAL 16

#### **RESPONDING TO THE RISE OF THOSE WITH "NO RELIGION"**

That the Catholic Church in Australia undertake a serious examination of the rise of the numbers identifying with "no religion" in the Census, what helps to keep people within (and identifying as part of) the community of faith, what moves people to having (and identify as having) faith, and to raising practice of the sacraments. (cf. *Instrumentum Laboris* 30-32)

## BACKGROUND

Due to the increasing number of people stating "no religion" on the Census.

### ► PROPOSAL 17

#### **SUPPORTING FAMILIES UNDER STRESS**

That the Catholic Church in Australia recognises that **family life** in Australia today is not well understood and supported, that all too many marriages end in divorce, and that many families are suffering various kinds of stress. The Church commits to promoting a pro-family culture and supporting families under stress and individuals hurting after rupture in their relationships.

## BACKGROUND

Due to the crisis in family life.

### ► PROPOSAL 18

#### **CARING FOR THOSE ON THE MARGINS**

That the Catholic Church ensure it is an advocate for all God's little ones: including at this time the unborn, newborn and disabled, the abused and the mentally ill, the frail elderly and the dying, the trafficked and pornographised, the refugees and homeless etc. We must not focus only on one or two of these groups of victims.

## BACKGROUND

Need to care for all of the people on the margins.

### PROPOSALS IN INTERVENTIONS BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Need greater emphasis on the Church's role in the promotion of just, humane, and responsible conditions in societies, as expressed in the social teaching of the Church. The proposal of Catholic Social Services Victoria for an additional agenda topic on justice and equity is worthy of consideration, although perhaps too narrowly defined. Find ways in the agenda for more specific attention to the church's mission of outreach, service, and care for all people and for the earth.

Consider the unique **ministry of deacons** as intermediaries; thereby bridging the gap within the Church, and between the Church and the rest of the world, both within the Church and “on the margins.” Consider the potential and “new wine” that the diaconate could bring to this renewed vision of a mission-driven and mission-structured Church; founded on the apostles and prophets but with Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:21).

Reaffirm our essential mission of serving the poor and the most vulnerable in our society and reflect deeply on new ways to work together if we are to truly fulfil the work of the Spirit.

We need to urgently address some major issues, because we are called to do so through our mission of social justice, service and ministry. This is also true in light of the Gospel teachings and our preferential option to serve the poor and vulnerable in our community.

In 2021 in Australia, the most vulnerable citizens in our community are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are grossly over-represented in jails and institutionalised care, living with poor or chronic health conditions, addiction, substance abuse, lower life expectancy, lower levels of education, homelessness, and poverty.

We are also called to serve those who are living with mental health issues, those at risk of suicide (particularly amongst our young people), people living with disabilities and in aged care (who are isolated and fragile), women and children living with domestic and family violence, our young people in the child protection system as well as members of the Stolen Generations and those who have been traumatised and abused in institutionalised care.

I believe we are called as leaders to be bold and brave. It takes courage to challenge systems and structures that are not inclusive as well as those that continue to oppress or cause hardship and suffering to others. Yet, never has there been a greater time in the Church's history to act. Now is the

time.

The experiences of “rainbow” people in our Church have been fraught and still are overshadowed by discrimination, even exclusion. We have a lot to learn from wider society. The stigma and barriers surrounding LGBTIQ+ people have been rapidly dismantling in recent years as enlightened understandings are assimilated. The respect for diversity in personal development and human relationships has led to more harmonious and healthy attitudes. The insistence on the non-discriminatory treatment of people based on sex, gender and religion has contributed to more inclusive authentic communities.

Yet, the Church runs the risk of leaving “rainbow” LGBTIQ+ people at the margins. Rather than meeting them there and bringing them into the fold with the promise of full participation, they remain “off the agenda”, left in the “too hard basket”.

The tone and impact of the language of Church spokespersons and others declaring what they call “Church teachings”, is judgemental, demeaning, and hurtful. It is simply not enough to say that everyone is loved by God and then draw a line in the sand over the full participation in the faith community of our “rainbow” sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, grandchildren, and friends.

We need to go out of “our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel”. We need boldness (*Instrumentum Laboris* 163) and ask: “who are the voiceless in the Church of Australia today?”

“Who must we walk with and accompany?” “How can our parishes and agencies be a vision and clear example of table fellowship?”

We must discern and develop rich, authentic ways in which our Church can provide a space that is reflective of a culture of listening and dialogue (*Instrumentum Laboris* 165). How do our formation programs ensure our leaders can be the face of Christ in our world: people of welcome and inclusion through their language, actions and deeds?

Plans for more observers at the Plenary from **other Christian churches** and communities, from **Jewish communities**, and from **other faiths** have had to be put on hold until the in-person Assembly next year. At that Assembly we would hope to have opportunities to pray with fellow Christians; and to have an event, in the spirit of the Assisi gatherings, of sharing openness to the Divine and the wisdom of our histories with one another.

The Church needs to walk the walk and talk the talk. It needs to be fully inclusive – “rainbow” people, women, minority peoples. No religious institutions should receive government funding to deliver secular services.

I wonder why the Church through her agencies (Catholic education, social services, Centacare,

Vinnies, hospitals – indeed the list is endless) ministers to all and yet there appears to be (to those in the Church but most definitely to those outside the Church) much angst/reluctance at welcoming all to the full life of the Church? The **Sunday Eucharist** provides all of us with the strength to be God's face to the world and to endeavour to bring God's kingdom to fruition. Yet as we have heard during the first assembly many are excluded or feel they are excluded.

Recognition and acceptance of **poverty** begins with each one of us. To acknowledge that I am poor is to confess that I am in need, that I am not self-sufficient, that I am not perfect. If this Plenary Council does not see the poor, dialogue with the poor, love the poor, then all of our other efforts will be in vain.

The Church needs to lead the way in our society in regard for all **people with disabilities**. The Church must recognise and reach out to each person with a disability as they are loved by God and are our brothers and sisters. Let the Catholic Church in Australia **advocate for people with disabilities** so that stigma, fear and discrimination be reduced, and equality enshrined. May parishes identify and actively invite people with disabilities into their midst. Parish clergy and parish members need to appreciate and value the gifts that people with disabilities offer to the life of their community. Let us provide for the pastoral and spiritual needs of people with disabilities and support them to have meaningful roles with the Church community, and to educate the parish communities with knowledge around inclusion.

We can never judge where another is on their faith journeys and, of course, the ongoing work of conversion is the Holy Spirit's alone. But I would encourage us all to look afresh at the people we see both inside and outside the Church. These voices cannot be forgotten, and our responses will be expanded when we consider the needs of **those we do not see within this Plenary Council**.

We are called to respond practically and in tenderness to those who are vulnerable: those dispossessed of land and culture, the unborn, disabled, frail elderly, refugees, the trafficked, those with mental illness, the homeless and those who are marginalised. The Australian Church is a Church that includes many **immigrants** and therefore ought to recognise and must respond to support **migrants**. We should use our privilege and our voice to influence society regarding the distress caused by our immigration policy and our government's refusal to acknowledge the rights of **refugees** and boat people. A Church that promotes **social justice** must advocate against mandatory and long-term detention of asylum-seekers.

We need to be a persistent voice for **climate refugees**, particularly those of Oceania who watch their homelands destroyed by rising waters. Responding to the needs of those displaced because of climate-related catastrophes is "at the heart of being a credible and witnessing Church, a caring and inclusive ecclesial community".

Relatively comfortable urban parishes could accept the challenge of partnering with other parishes

to help vulnerable groups and those on the periphery of society (locally, regionally, in remote areas and overseas).

Establishing a national approach to parish outreach and support programs catering to the needy, vulnerable, and marginalised would be a pragmatic and efficient strategy; as would making meaningful connections with other local faith communities and agencies in support of the vulnerable. Making dormant properties available to provide housing to those in need could also be among the suite of pragmatic responses.

## Question Five:

**How might the Church in Australia respond to the call to 'ecological conversion'? How can we express and promote a commitment to an 'integral ecology of life' in all its dimensions, with particular attention to the more vulnerable people and environments in our country and region?**

### **SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT**

The focus of our discernment was the nature and the character of our response to the call of ecological conversion, the promotion of an **integral ecology** and an enduring commitment to the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised.

In this task, Scripture offered provocation rather than consolation, and challenge rather than certainty. It provided stimulus for prayer but equally for action. It led us away from the appealing simplicity of binary choice. We were drawn by the Holy Spirit into our contemporary world – a world in which we live and with which we must engage. This was the genesis of our conversion: that the worthy worship of God begins with Care for our Common Home. All is sacred and interrelated – a communion of all beings. “Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships” (*Laudato Si'* 240).

To exist is to be held in the infinity of divine love ... every person, every creature, every tree and rock ... all are our brothers and sisters, beloved of God, to be revered, respected and cared for as an integral part of the “rule of God’s love.” “For you love all things that exist and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it” (Wisdom 11:24).

**Conversion** to the Lord opens the heart to perceive creation as an utterly beautiful gift. This openness works both ways and converts us? “The human person grows more, matures more, and is sanctified more, to the extent that he or she enters into a relationship, going out of themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures” (*Laudato Si'* 240).

## TOPICS AND CONCRETE POINTS FOR *ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION*:

- a turning from human dominance to belonging to the community of life and to interdependence with all other creatures.
- grounded in creaturely reality leads to humility, (humus, earth) and conversion.
- awe in the beauty of creation: nourished, sense of God's presence.

"The universe unfolds in God who fills it completely. Hence there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things" (*Laudato Si'* 223).

- There is a universal solidarity flowing from the Trinity: "Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity" (*Laudato Si'* 240). Therefore, ecological conversion offers:
  - Common ground for **ecumenical and interfaith dialogue**;
  - Pathway to engage the broader society especially **youth**;
  - Informs outreach to the **poor** – the cry of the earth is their cry too.

## NOTES ON DISCERNMENT

In discerning a response to this question there was a strong sense that the Spirit moved the diverse group of people that we are to a sense of common understanding and agreement.

We thus ask the Assembly to acknowledge the primacy of **Ecological conversion**; personal and communal. We ask for the explicit adoption of the Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* Action Plan as the vehicle for that conversion. This establishes a common plan for an Australian Church, open and committed to God's creation.

The **Action Plan** is grounded in seven goals:

- Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to equitably address climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological sustainability.
- Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call for global solidarity with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children.
- Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere – our common home.
- Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency (living with just enough and not excess) to ensure a good life for all.

- Ecological Education refers to the need to re-think and re-design curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology to foster ecological awareness and action.
- Ecological Spirituality encourages greater contact and connections with the natural world in the spirit of wonder, praise, joy, happiness, and gratitude.
- Community Engagement and Participatory Action is crucial to care for creation at local, regional, national, and international levels.

Those goals are to be animated across seven sectors: Families, Parishes and Dioceses, Educational Institutes (schools, universities et al.), Hospitals and healthcare systems, Economy sector (workers and businesses, co-operations et al.), Organisations and Groups (ecological communities, NGOs, lay movements, communications centres, foundations et al.), Religious Orders (orders, provinces and communities).

Related **recommendations** include, but are by no means limited to:

- A public commitment, with governance models, frameworks, processes and procedures that acknowledge and engage all levels of the Church;
- Regular reporting on progress towards and accountability for defined goals and objectives;
- Co-construction of those goals and objectives with the very people they are meant to support and serve;
- An open embrace of the ancient and eternal wisdoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- A commitment to initial and ongoing formation and interdisciplinary education – tools to unlearn current postures, practices, and preferences. Tools to learn new ways of being, and new ways of doing.

We ask the Assembly to acknowledge the missionary impulse that so colours the prayers of Pope Francis at the conclusion of *Laudato Si'*. They are prayers that embrace and see the connection between all and look to the future of our Common Home.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

The call to **ecological conversion** expressed in *Laudato Si'* provides inspiration and encouragement for developing sustainable ecological strategies adapted to our lands and climate conditions. Our Church's responses in this area should be undertaken in close partnership with First Nations People and consider ecological conversion, sustainability and economic development.

## Question Six:

**How might we become a more contemplative people, committing more deeply to prayer as a way of life, and celebrating the Liturgy of the Church as an encounter with Christ who sends us out to “Make disciples of all the nations”?**

### THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Our group prayed over and deeply engaged with Question Six. There was plenty of personal sharing especially around the listening and praying over the Scripture text each day. We came to appreciate that importance of prayer to each participant. It was clear that “Prayer is a way of life for all in the group.”
2. We recognise that it is the desire for that intimate relationship with God that draws people to prayer. We acknowledge that our desire for God is always nourished by God in the first instance. Prayer is firstly about forming a personal relationship with Christ. More stress on the need to facilitate an encounter came through in all the discussions we had.
3. We recognise that discipleship must be intentional, and this implies that when the community of disciples gathers in worship, particularly in liturgical celebrations, all are “conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration”. We posed the question, “How do we engage people to pray?” We see people feeling disconnected due to COVID and yearning for deep connection through liturgy and prayer – how can we cater to that now and in the future?
4. There was some discussion about the full understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity— is in a state of decline in Australia. We acknowledge that one of the challenges that we face is how we might better welcome God’s people to the Eucharist and assist them to understand what this sacrament offers, entails and asks of those who receive it. Mass is the highest form of prayer; need for understanding of the Mass and bringing of solemnity in a way that portrays the mystery. Bringing in the beauty of the Mass leads our hearts into reception of Jesus in Eucharist. Need for formation. Adoration and the various presences of God in the Eucharist. Presence in the Scriptures and Presence in the Liturgy itself and often we neglect that presence. The presence in each other as well. Do we recognise that presence? Presence in the Eucharist. Cannot lose sense of community and mission which springs from that presence in us.
5. Recognising that fewer people today participate in the sacramental life of the Church than in previous times, the question of how best to provide formation on the sacraments arises. Such

formation will need to focus on both deepening people's faith and increasing their knowledge.

6. Assisting the faithful in better developing a life of prayer outside the Mass, including personal prayer and the prayer of families and groups, has also been recognised as integral to holiness in everyday life and engagement with the Eucharist. We are concerned that too few young people in our schools have been invited into a close relationship with Jesus. We need to develop an awareness of prayer; formation is needed, and the development of a people committed to prayer. We have provided a direction, which is inclusive of formation for prayer styles, liturgy, which contributes to but is not exhaustive in its contribution to "make disciples".

7. We also need to attend to our sense of welcome and hospitality. We need to ask ourselves, as a community, how warmly do we welcome others into our midst. There are also many groups of people who do not feel that they belong in the Church, especially at the Eucharist. They feel excluded and marginalised by the Church. We believe that the liturgy should welcome and inspire us; capture every aspect of our being; be beautiful and be Kingdom/mission oriented; be broad so that no situations are excluded; be accessible and not require a high level of theological literacy. Pharasaic or law-ridden approaches to liturgy (e.g. Baptism) do not show the heart of Jesus and the acceptance we are aspiring to. Welcome is a process and a journey and we have to meet people where they are at. Welcome and hospitality comes through in the way we celebrate liturgy. If we are not forming people – particularly priests – well enough in the celebration of liturgy, then welcome will not come across.

8. Catholic spiritual traditions and charisms, such as those offered by religious congregations and ecclesial movements, offer much to the increasing desire for an authentic way of life, among young adults but also many others who are searching for meaning and fulfilment in uncertain times. We spoke about the many charisms of the religious congregations and movements and mentioned that there is also a diocesan spirituality.

9. The Church offers us a variety of schools of prayer, liturgical traditions and practices through which people can be drawn into an ever-deepening encounter and lifelong conversion to Christ. This includes spiritual reading, the Liturgy of the Hours, the rosary, *lectio divina*, the practice of Grace at meals. It was noted how popular Eucharistic Adoration is, especially among some younger Catholics. This could be a starting point for the wider faith formation of youth.

10. Spiritual direction is not readily available to many Catholics while, more positively, there remains an enduring hunger to read and study Scripture, particularly the Gospels. We as the Plenary Council might consider ways in which the spiritual lives of Catholics can be further nurtured through the discovery or re-discovery of these resources within our Catholic spiritual tradition.

11. We look to the future, we recognise the important role that our bishops, dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, retreat centres, theological institutes, and communities of the lay faithful

can play in this renewal of formation in prayer and holiness. Recognising the “signs of the times”, the development of theologically sound resources, including digital forms of accompaniment such as podcasts and other online media, can support the People of God in learning to pray within the tradition of the Church and in their daily lives.

12. We should normalise a culture of formation. Encounter and prayer is a way of life and part of this whole report; formation – the positive experience that we have all experienced this week in spiritual conversations. Spiritual conversation does not only apply to Ignatian spirituality. Every Catholic agency could begin (e.g., meetings) with spiritual conversation.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- In Romans 10 – how can people believe if no one goes out to preach to them? Wonderful resources online but no one to take them to others or preach to others.
- Look at ways we reach out to people and announce to others.
- *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 37 – how do we make texts available? Still a very narrow and western expression. How are we taking the inculturation question and building a bridge to the people of God right now? Explicit mention of that is helpful.
- Not leading people into an understanding but to a connection and an experience of God, the real presence of God. The essence of the whole of the main group report boils down to formation (families and individuals); a sense of gathering then welcome.
- The proposals going into the Second Assembly should look at legislative action that supports the discerned needs of formation that will support and underpin becoming a contemplative people, committing more deeply to prayer, celebrating the liturgy, which propels the sense of mission.
- Need to be present in the space where people are – online. A lot of the resources online exist in a vacuum without voice and guidance across dioceses. Need to engage people online as an initial encounter but then identify the process between online encounter and real-life relationships, e.g. in the parish.
- Offering some case studies. What do we admire? Creation of Catholic Voices; look at French religious movements that have had a re-evangelisation of parishes.
- How can we offer studies of how renewal has taken place in other places? Translate into our discussions and offer a way forward.

- Bishop Umbers' YouTube clips – engaging and speak to young people on social media. In addition to traditional resources, we do have some new resources.
- Learn from the Melkites on participation in the liturgy. Deacons help to facilitate worship with the people – standing with the people and bringing their prayers to the altar.
- Minor Orders – a subdiaconate where one would be involved in some of the deacons' work; providing facilitation of prayer within the community.
- Sharing and reflecting this week was about contemplation and prayer. The main group report is all about contemplation and prayer; but prayer is about mission so perhaps we are missing something of the mission part.
- Something we spoke about was the inclusiveness of the language but also about using language we can understand. Language does not “click” with people, nor does the underlying theology of the language. The Pope has put that back to the local Church – particularly within the local context.
- Echoing comment about prayer as the experience and encounter with Christ – not just theological ideas. Lots of knowledge but one of the graces of the first assembly has been the primary desire for all to know Jesus.
- Connections between some of the other comments regarding going out, prayer as experience and encounter, and prayer leading to action. Something missing in paragraph 3 about people who are disconnected from the Church by COVID-19, etc. This might be a space to recognise the large demographic of Catholics who have not yet had that encounter with Christ, who have not moved into that space of prayer as life. We who are gathered here and have had that encounter are the ones who must be sent out to meet them where they are at. Something that perhaps needs to be expanded or fleshed out a little bit more.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### ► **PROPOSAL 19**

#### ***ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINISTRY OF PREACHING IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA***

Preaching the Gospel lies at the heart of Christian witness. In liturgical practice, this dimension of preaching has been entrusted to the ordained ministry through the sharing with presbyters and deacons the bishops' prophetic office and role as “authentic teachers” (*Lumen Gentium*, 25).

In developing and sustaining this self-understanding of the missionary activity of the Church, the centrality of the Word of God cannot be overestimated, and the sign of the times that is the place of women and men in Australian society, invite us to explore how the Word of God could be proclaimed by a variety of voices from different contexts.

With this in mind, it is proposed that this Plenary explore a new Ministry of Preaching. This stands in continuity with recent developments in the ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist. In January 2021, Pope Francis issued the motu proprio, *Spiritus Domini*, which allowed that the lay ministries of Lector and Acolyte, “since they are based on the Sacrament of Baptism, may be entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female.” Following on from this, in May 2021, Pope Francis issued another motu proprio, *Antiquum Ministerium*, to formally establish the ministry of Catechist as an “expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith” (6).

Given the pastoral and liturgical needs of the present moment and seeking a pathway towards the future, the establishment of a Ministry of Preaching, which is “entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female” would encourage an accessible, vibrant, well-grounded and faithful proclamation of the Gospel within a variety of liturgical settings. Not only would this be an assistance to communities whose need is to hear the Gospel proclaimed and communicated with clarity and urgency, but also recognises the participation of the laity in the prophetic office of Christ and unlocks new treasures of wisdom and lived experience through new voices and perspectives who speak from various contexts of daily life.

As with all instituted ministries, the discernment, oversight, and regulation of the local ordinary is presumed, with adequate opportunities for regional and national formation programs to be overseen at both a national and provincial level.

## BACKGROUND

With mission as the lens for our Plenary Council, I feel moved to propose this motion because of the centrality of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church, and the need of the People of God to be nourished by a Word that engages and develops their faith. The initiative could be seen as a development in the ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist as proposed in Pope Francis’ two motu proprio of *Spiritus Domini* and *Antiquum Ministerium*. Furthermore:

- Amongst the charismatic gifts available to the building-up of the life of the Church, preaching and teaching is one recognised by the Church and often exercised effectively;
- The Word needs to be proclaimed by a variety of voices from different contexts;
- It would aid clergy over-burdened by pastoral and sacramental commitments;
- Not all presiders are gifted with the pastoral intimacy, agility and proficiency necessary for a preaching that engages and supports the faith development of the local community;

- There are precedents in history and canon law for lay preachers.

This is something we can do, and doing what is possible for the good of the Church will enable the Spirit to open pathways for the future of the Church in Australia.

## ► PROPOSAL 20

### ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINISTRY OF PREACHING IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

I propose that the Plenary Council decide to develop a new Ministry of Preaching "entrusted to all suitable and adequately formed faithful, whether male or female" (*Spiritus Domini*) with the appropriate formation and training, in order to encourage an accessible, vibrant, well-grounded and faithful proclamation of the Gospel within a variety of liturgical settings, under the discernment, oversight and regulation of the local Ordinary.

#### BACKGROUND

Preaching the Gospel lies at the heart of Christian witness, and is vital to the flourishing of the Church. The Church exists in order to evangelise [...] in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace..." (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). Currently, in liturgical practice, this dimension of preaching has been entrusted to the ordained ministry by sharing with presbyters and deacons the bishop's teaching and prophetic office (*Lumen Gentium*, 25).

However, Vatican II affirms that all the baptised participate in this prophetic office (the office of preaching and teaching): "Christ is the great prophet who proclaimed the kingdom of the Father both by the testimony of his life and the power of his word. Until the full manifestation of his glory, he fulfils this prophetic office, not only through the hierarchy who teach in his name and by his power, but also through the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with an appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and the grace of the word, so that the power of the Gospel may shine out in daily family and social life... The laity become heralds of the faith in things to be hoped for (see Heb 11:1) if they unhesitatingly join the profession of faith to the life of faith. This evangelisation—that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the witness of their lives — acquires a special character and a particular effectiveness because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world" (*Lumen Gentium*, 35). This teaching invites us to explore how the Word of God could be proclaimed by a variety of voices from different contexts. This proposal fits within the idea of an ordered ministry in the Church and could be considered a doctrinal development of this number 35 of *Lumen Gentium*.

The proposal that this Plenary explore a new Ministry of Preaching stands in continuity with recent developments in the ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist. In January 2021, Pope Francis issued

the *motu proprio*, *Spiritus Domini*, which allowed that the lay ministries of Lector and Acolyte, “since they are based on the Sacrament of Baptism, may be entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female.” In May 2021, another *motu proprio*, *Antiquum Ministerium*, formally established the ministry of Catechist as an “expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith” (6).

Given the pastoral and liturgical needs of the present moment and seeking a pathway towards the future, the establishment of a Ministry of Preaching, which is “entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female” would encourage an accessible, vibrant, well-grounded and faithful proclamation of the Gospel within a variety of liturgical settings. This would be an assistance to communities who need to hear the gospel proclaimed and communicated with clarity and urgency, and unlocks new treasures of wisdom and lived experience through new voices and perspectives who speak from various contexts of daily life.

The attempt is not to undermine the place of clergy, nor to reduce the need for ongoing formation of pastors in their preaching ministry. Neither need it undermine the specific and essential ministry of the diaconate in the Church, although a theology of a ministry of preaching might, at times, have similarities to the theology of diaconal preaching in which a deacon does not preside over the Eucharist, but breaks open the Word liturgically while offering the “chalice of service” in the world through their daily vocation. Rather, the proposal seeks to form a broader group of ministers who will bring their own unique gifts to the task of preaching, so the Word of God can be more broadly known, received and loved.

## ► PROPOSAL 21

### COMMITMENT TO BEAUTY

I propose that the Church in Australia commit to a renewal of beauty in sacred music, architecture, art, churches, and liturgy. As provided for in the new *Ratio* for seminarian formation, seminarians would be trained in the tradition of liturgical aesthetics. Priests would have access to those working in these areas within the Catholic universities and within existing liturgy offices.

#### BACKGROUND

In the listening and discernment phase of the Plenary Council, the beauty of liturgy was identified as a key element for those who felt drawn to the Church. This enhances the experience of the sacredness of the liturgy and fosters a supernatural and yet personal encounter with God.

► **PROPOSAL 22**

**PRAYER RESOURCES: ENABLING MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP**

As a way to meet the desire for a deeper prayer life as part of “rebuilding” the Church, expressed in the Listening and Discernment sessions, I would like to propose the development of prayer resources to assist people to learn to pray/enrich their prayer amidst the busyness of life, drawing on the richness of prayer (in all Catholic rites) and focusing on prayer opportunities for families and children.

**BACKGROUND**

As was expressed in intervention 37 on 10.4.21, prayer is essential to the rebuilding of the Catholic Church in Australia. This would be a practical way to do this.

► **PROPOSAL 23**

**THE USE OF LATIN IN THE LITURGY**

That the Church in Australia promote use of **Latin** in the weekly Sunday Mass as envisioned by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council who while recognising the importance of the vernacular also taught that “the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites” and that faithful should “be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them”.

**BACKGROUND**

Due to the fact there is a lack of love and devotion in the liturgy and that the proposed call of the reform of the Sacred Liturgy at Vatican II called for the use of Latin in the Liturgy.

► **PROPOSAL 24**

**SACRED MUSIC**

That the Church in Australia promote the teaching and use of Gregorian chant in the Liturgy as taught by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. As the Council taught, Gregorian chant “is specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services”.

**BACKGROUND**

Music at Mass is providing no substance to young people. Gregorian chant offers the heart and soul to be drawn towards God and takes us to a sacred place.

► **PROPOSAL 25**

**EUCCHARISTIC RENEWAL**

That the Plenary Council affirm our desire to implement a program of Eucharistic renewal in the belief, devotion and theology around the Blessed Sacrament at parish, diocesan and national level.

**BACKGROUND**

In recent years we have witnessed large and small gatherings of youth in wonder and awe at adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Although they may not know how to articulate this reverence, they feel included and renewed spending time in prayerful silence. Our hope would be that with formation they would develop a better understanding and appreciation of the gift of the Eucharist, their desire for Jesus would increase, and ultimately lead to the experience of sacramental reconciliation and holy communion.

► **PROPOSAL 26**

**INTERNATIONAL EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS**

That the Church in Australia bid to hold the **International Eucharistic Congress** in 2028.

**BACKGROUND**

In 1928 Sydney hosted the 29th International Eucharistic Congress. This will mark the centenary of the 1928 Congress. It will provide an inclusive opportunity for Australian Catholics to strengthen their understanding and appreciation of the centrality of the Eucharist.

► **PROPOSAL 27**

**EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS**

That the Plenary Council would endorse plans for a **Eucharistic Congress** to be held in **Sydney in 2028** and that associated with it would be a national program of faith renewal and papal visit.

**BACKGROUND**

It advances the faith of the Catholic people – a concrete fruit of the Plenary.

► **PROPOSAL 28**

**PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS**

I have witnessed in the first assembly the great diversity of the Catholic Church in Australia. There was a group of radical, mostly aged men and women looking for women priests, third rite penance

and such things. They mean well, I am sure, but these proposals will do nothing to stem the crisis of faith we are experiencing. On the other hand, there were many sound proposals, coming largely from young members of the assembly. Many are looking for guidance and leadership from the shepherds of the Church. If guided in the right direction, they will give a sure future to the Church.

The current pandemic will only deepen the crisis of faith and catechesis we are experiencing. New structures and canonical reforms will be useless unless we undergo a New Evangelisation and a renewal of faith. I humbly suggest that the bishops set such a process in motion with a **National Eucharistic Congress** which will unite the people of God in this country and lay the foundation for a New Evangelisation and catechesis built on the Eucharist.

The Plenary Council has barely touched the ordinary Catholics in the pews. An event such as a Eucharistic Congress would reach the ordinary people and I am sure would bring down great blessings on us all.

## BACKGROUND

Love of Christ and his Church.

### ► PROPOSAL 29

#### PROMOTION OF PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

I propose that the Church in Australia promote family prayer through the development of a **Catholic Prayer Book for Families** which would include an explanation and instructions for saying the Rosary, the Angelus, the Magnificat and a range of traditional prayers which have been promoted throughout the Church's history, particularly here in Australia. And that each family in our Catholic parishes receives a copy of this prayer book.

## BACKGROUND

One of the six areas of discernment that came out of the consultation process was '**Prayer and Eucharist**'. In this area of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, no 48, it was acknowledged that many people desire "formation in prayer". This motion seeks to address this important request made by the people of God in Australia.

### ► PROPOSAL 30

#### CELEBRATIONS OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY

That each diocese designate a prominent feast day to celebrate Catholic identity, such as Pentecost,

Corpus Christi or Christ the King, through public prayer such as praying the Holy Rosary, Eucharistic processions or statuary processions, with large gatherings, sacred icons, music, banners, film, posters etc., and involving families, parishes, ethnic communities, school communities, religious congregations, and Church agencies.

## BACKGROUND

Need to promote a **Catholic identity**.

### ► PROPOSAL 31

#### **RENEWING THE FIRST AND SECOND FORM OF THE RITE OF RECONCILIATION**

As part of the healing journey and to foster conversion, we ask for a renewal in catechesis around and reception of the **First and Second Form of the Rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation**. That parishes across Australia will offer consistent opportunities to receive the First Rite of Reconciliation before and/or after some weekend Masses, and occasionally offer the Second Form of the Rite of Reconciliation to meet the pastoral needs of the community. Further, that opportunities to receive this sacrament be made consistently available at times that suit the pastoral needs of the community.

## BACKGROUND

Addressing the Council on the topic of mission, Fr Richard Lennan reminded us that conversion must proceed and accompany all missionary activity. “We don’t address the world from a position of perfection,” he said . But what we must do, he continued, is “first experience the good news before we can share it.” If we are to become a more humble, healing and merciful Church, a regular practice of the sacrament of Reconciliation must return to the lives of individuals and parishes.

We cannot bring the healing love of God to those who have been hurt by the Church until we are first vulnerable enough to receive it ourselves. The Council’s fourth thematic paper calls us “to contemplate these [wounded] faces and sit in the uncomfortable place of our pain.” We must do this first within our own souls. It will be uncomfortable. But it will ultimately bring us true humility and hope, because “the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus allow us to confront the horror of trauma, loss and grief, with the promise of hope, redemption and new life.”

The communal effects of sin have never been so widely and publicly acknowledged, even in secular society. We cannot be effective agents of ecological or structural conversion until we face our own need for personal conversion, reducing the “carbon footprint” of our impatience, our pride, our addictions. And just as communal sins require public apologies and redress, so too do our personal sins require some form of public acknowledgement and penance. The sacrament of reconciliation,

offered in a parish setting, is an exquisite blend of privacy and publicity, where acknowledgement of weakness becomes true spiritual strength, not just for the individual, but for the community.

Some among Australian Catholics have called for an increased use of the **third form of the rite of reconciliation**. Listening to these voices allows us to hear the desire for an encounter with the God of mercy, and also the very real struggle that comes with confessing one's sins to a priest. However, before even considering the spiritual reality, our secular society is able to teach us that confessing privately to God, as found in many Protestant traditions, will not bring the same psychosomatic healing as auricular confession. The importance of mental health awareness, mindfulness, authenticity, and counselling all shows us that the human person is body and soul. We need an opportunity to verbally name and own our sins; and even more so, we need an opportunity to hear personally spoken to us, by Jesus through the lips of the priest, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace."

In our social media driven society, where public "confessions" are frequent yet cheap, young people flock to this sacrament, and find in it a moment of true vulnerability and authenticity, where they can take off their mask and encounter the God who loves them regardless of what they have done and failed to do.

Let us answer Pope Francis' call for a more intentional and frequent reception of this powerful sacrament. "When I go to confession," he says in his March 2021 prayer video, "it is in order to be healed, to heal my soul. To leave with greater spiritual health." The Body cannot flourish without the health of its members, from the greatest to the least. So the Pope continues, "Let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the forgiveness and infinite mercy of God."

## ► PROPOSAL 32

### **OCTAVE CELEBRATION OF PENTECOST**

That this Plenary Council would ask the ACBC to explore with the Holy See a change to the liturgical calendar that would introduce an **octave celebration of Pentecost**, complementing those of Christmas and Easter. It would be a recognition in part of the presence of the Holy Spirit eternally with the Church on her pilgrim journey.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Many at the Plenary have called for a renewal of faith. This would be another concrete way to advance and renew the faith of Catholic people, especially in light of the many new Spirit-inspired communities.

## ► PROPOSAL 33

### A MARIAN CHURCH

That resources be developed to facilitate a revival in authentic, traditional **Marian devotion**, accompanied by Marian catechesis in our parishes, with a focus on the role of Mary as the model of discipleship, and the most enduring model of the Church.

#### BACKGROUND

In calling us to prayerfully discern the themes for this Plenary, the *Instrumentum Laboris* concludes by reminding us that St Mary of the Cross Mackillop modelled her life after Mary, Mother of God. “Do whatever he tells you” was the motto that inspired these women to give their full yes to God and the Church, in good times and in bad, in joy and in suffering. The *Instrumentum* continues, “Under the title, Help of Christians, Mary has been Australia’s patroness since 1844. In May 2020, the bishops entrusted our country to her care, seeking her intercession for the safety of all our people especially in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. (202).” In Our Lady, we see a model of holiness, that path to sainthood is paved with the constant renewal of saying “yes” to God’s plan.

The *Catechism* reminds us that the Marian dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine. In order for the Church to experience authentic structural renewal ordered towards mission, we must rediscover the Marian dimension of the Church. Like Mary, we must be "totally ordered to holiness," and all our initiatives must be at the service of that "love that never ends" (CCC 773). A revival in Marian devotion from the grassroots level must be the source of this transformation.

## ► PROPOSAL 34

### THE LITURGY

That the Plenary Council affirm the benefits of the priest celebrating Mass in an **ad orientem** posture for the Liturgy of Eucharist.

It is little understood that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in their document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* did not seek any change in the orientation of the priest during the Liturgy Eucharist. Indeed, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* supposes that the priest is maintaining the **ad orientem** posture during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This is the ancient tradition of the Church for which the Church herself has produced no negative theological judgement. Indeed, many theologians have offered beautiful reflections on deep spiritual meaning of this posture, in particular Pope Benedict (Cardinal Ratzinger) and Cardinal Sarah. Pope Benedict has said:

“On the other hand, a common turning to the East during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of something accidental, but of what is essential.

Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialogue, but of common worship, of setting off towards the One who is to come. What corresponds with the reality of what is happening is not the closed circle, but the common movement forward expressed in a common direction for prayer." (*The Spirit of the Liturgy, Chapter 3*)

Many priests in Australia have returned to the practice and speak positively of the impact it has had on their parishioners, in particular that it has helped them more deeply participate in the Sacred Mysteries taking place.

## BACKGROUND

Call to deeper prayer.

### ► PROPOSAL 35

#### OPEN OUR CHURCHES

That, when lockdowns are permanently lifted, dioceses and parishes make provision to enable our church buildings to be **open** throughout the majority of the day for private prayer and visitation; that Catholics be encouraged to visit regularly; and that the practice of **making offerings** (such as lighting candles, placing flowers, doing a service like cleaning in the church etc) be facilitated. That this be promoted to children, families, and teachers in Catholic schools as well as to parishioners.

## BACKGROUND

If we want to promote engagement beyond Sunday or weekday Mass, we need to encourage a culture of "whole of week" faith. People crave the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist but work and family commitments can make it impossible to get to the church at scheduled times. It is appreciated that this might present security challenges with financial implications, so appeals to local Catholics to support this should be made.

## Question Seven:

How might we better embrace the diverse liturgical traditions of the Churches which make up the Catholic Church and the cultural gifts of immigrant communities to enrich the spirituality and worship of the Church in Australia?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

Establish a national entity to foster the inclusion of the **Rites of the Eastern Church** (sui juris), and **Rites of the Latin Church**, respecting the sacraments and liturgical calendars of each.

Teach Eastern tradition and spirituality:

- In the prayer and liturgical life of Catholic communities, including parishes and schools.
- In the formation of teachers in Catholic institutes.
- In the religious education curriculums of diocesan and Catholic independent schools.
- In university and Catholic institute education.

Include representations in whole Church gatherings of the Eastern Catholics without an Ordinary or diocese.

The group reiterated that we must not use the term “immigrant communities”, we are **intercultural communities** of diverse, linguistic, spiritual and liturgical traditions.

The group stated that we need a more organised and coordinated approach, through the establishment of a national entity of some form. We are cultural and linguistically diverse communities in the Catholic Church in Australia. We must not do this simply for the satisfaction of those Churches and communities, but rather for the richness and gifts that diversity brings to the entire Church.

We must do more than acknowledge diversity, rather we must enshrine diversity in all we do; in particular, when it comes to breathing with an Eastern and Western lung. We need to examine the ways that ethnic communities exist with a diocese.

There is a need for the Eastern Church and the diverse cultural and linguistic communities to be reflected in whole Church liturgical gatherings in Australia. Our liturgical celebrations need to be attentive to particular cultural traditions and enrich worship and celebrate the diversity of community.

We need to encounter the various forms of prayer and worship across our Eastern Churches and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We as a Church need to acquire a better knowledge of diverse liturgical traditions, and also explore more deeply the diverse cultural gifts of our communities, especially in relation to cultural celebrations, particularly in the context of local communities.

We need to acknowledge the importance of having priests able to minister in the various languages of people and communities in our Church.

We need to commit to not allowing culture to cause division. There are different Rites and usages within the Latin Church, and they should be duly recognised and respected.

We need to be attentive to the language of gender within our liturgies and consider how welcoming our liturgies are. Education is an essential part of understanding of diversity and enshrining it.

We need to focus more closely and collaborate with the Eastern Churches and diverse linguistic and cultural communities in our Church to include and enshrine in our Catholic.

Education: the teaching of Eastern tradition and spirituality, in particular in relation to the sacraments of initiation.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- Be **inclusive** and celebrate diversity – Indigenous, varied culture, faith and language backgrounds.
- There is a need for greater understanding and respect for each tradition.
- Learn from the Melkites re participation in the liturgy. Deacons help to facilitate worship with the people, standing with the people and bringing their prayers to the altar.

## Question Eight:

How might we better form leaders for mission – adults, children and families, couples and single people?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

##### FORMATION FOR MISSION LEADERSHIP

- The **mission** of the Church is the mission of Jesus, which is to make the reign of God a reality; to incarnate it in our place and time.
  - Mission is the call of the Universal Church and grounded in the encounter with Jesus.
  - The **Holy Spirit** is the principal formator.
  - Mission is not just acting but also **listening**, allowing the other to inform and influence how we engage. Leadership requires the skills to listen and to **dialogue**.
  - Christian Ministry comprises activities that help make God's reign real in our time and place; activity that incarnates the Word and brings life, light and love. Mission and ministry are dynamic.
- **Relationship** is central to formation.
  - Leadership must be **Christ-centred**; it is our relationship with Christ that nourishes us for mission. The Holy Spirit moulds us into the image of Christ throughout our whole lives.
  - **Relationships with others** and the power of journeying with others. An important part of leadership formation is **accompaniment**, both being accompanied and accompanying others. There is a need for training in this area. This also includes connection with others in human suffering.
- Leadership in the Church is varied and reflects different charisms.
  - The contexts of **Leadership** differ markedly. Irrespective, leaders light the way for effective mission and ministry.
  - **Servant Leadership** – the need for humility and the importance of friendship in

leadership formation.

- Formation needs to be available for all the different forms and roles of Leadership. These range from boards of Catholic entities to parish family groups, from isolated parishes in the outback to Archdiocesan chanceries, informal and formal roles.
- Formation is concerned with deepening people’s knowledge of God and their **discipleship** of Jesus. It supports and empowers people to live out the Church’s mission. Some principles of formation include:
  - All are called to mission through our Baptism.
  - Formation is relational; marked by hospitality and respect, where warmth, humanness and humour help people feel comfortable and engage.
  - Formation is always personal. It allows people to be who they are before God.
  - Formation must meet people where they are and take them somewhere: a journey to Jesus. The starting point is the context of people’s lives.
  - The style and content of formation will depend on where people are.
  - Formation is invitational and needs to provide safe spaces where people can share their lives and faith.
  - Formation needs to bring people into community with others who are attracted to Jesus and the mission of the Church. This will help empower them to live their lives as God is calling them.
  - Formation should be planned, sequenced, creative, well resourced, and preferably team delivered.
  - Formation processes need to be flexible. Formation opportunities need to be broad and cater for the diversity of needs.
  - Formation should empower people to be authentic witnesses for Christ.
- The Context of Formation
  - **The need for Integrated and Experiential Formation.** This is the idea that formation courses for leaders adopt the principle of integration where catechesis in Catholic theology is integrated with experiential spirituality, psychological insights so that the whole person is formed: spiritually, intellectually, physically, psycho-emotionally, relationally, and creatively.
  - Leadership formation is **multidimensional** and needs to integrate all aspects of leadership formation including academic, spiritual, physical, emotional, experiential, and liturgical. This also considers stages of life and stages of human development.

- Formation should be made **accessible** for all.
- Formation needs to be **diverse** and meet the needs of those across the country.
- Formation should include the **identification and discerning of our God-given gifts and talents.**
- Formation needs to be embedded in a culture of **lifelong learning** – from the womb to the tomb.
- Some formation processes:
  - The importance of **Witness** – Giving personal testimonials of Christ’s love in one’s life.
  - The **kerygma** (basic proclamation of the Gospel), an invitation to relationship with Jesus.
  - **Prayer** as an invitation to intimacy with God and that prayer is essential in leadership formation.
  - The importance of the **Christian family** as the centre of life formation. We discussed the need to come alongside and form the “leaders of the family” in mission, so that they in turn can form the people they are leading. We believe we need to wrestle with the important question of “How do we utilise the family as the powerful force it is in the formation of leaders?”
  - The role of the **community of faith** – that is, all the roles and all the parts of the body. We discussed the need for a vehicle that is more than a program or course, but one that is grounded in life formation, support and learning – something ongoing. We should explore the success stories in Australia, the ecclesial communities and lay-led movements that have been successfully forming intentional disciples and missionaries, examples include, but not limited to the Neocatechumenal Way, Opus Dei, Focolare, Communion and Liberation, Disciples of Jesus, Emmanuel Community (Brisbane), and more. In these groups, people are accompanied and led to intentional discipleship by a process of lifelong formation.
  - It is important for people to be offered a catechumenate – an ongoing process of formation – that will nourish them in faith and sustain them in spiritual growth. As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1231: “By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth.”

## ► SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

- That a National Institute or National Coordinating Committee for formation be founded (like Word on Fire in the USA).
- That formation programs and resources be made known and accessible, possibly using the National Centre for Pastoral Research.
- That the online and media resources, integrated in nature and embedded in the Australian cultural context, be collated and made available.
- That financial support in the form of sponsorships, scholarships and grants be made available for formation.
- That technology be used to make use of scarce resources (human and financial) with high levels of collaboration.
- That tertiary institutions and Catholic education authorities sponsor and conduct some formation.
- That a catechumenate for leadership formation be established
  - that this include a marriage catechumenate in parishes;
  - that this include formation for families as faith leaders.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- Conferences and conventions as a means of leadership formation.
- A need for youth and young adult leadership formation.
- Leadership formation for workers and in the world of culture/arts/cinema.
- Leadership formation specifically for men and for women.
- Need to be present in the space where people are – online. A lot of the resources online exist in a vacuum without guidance across dioceses.
- In addition to traditional resources, we do have some new resources.
- Minor Orders – a subdiaconate where one would be involved in some of the deacons' work; providing facilitation of prayer within the community.
- Be guided by *Antiquum Ministerium* – Apostolic Letter Instituting the Ministry of Catechist.
- Ongoing formation for leadership and governance must occur at all levels: parish (e.g., pastoral council members), diocesan, AMPJP, ACBC.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### ► *PROPOSAL 36*

#### *RE-ENGAGING WITH WOMEN IN THE CHURCH*

To launch a national five-year Liturgy of Lament and Welcome including the Sacraments of a Third Rite of Reconciliation and Communion as the food of Mercy.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Following Pope Francis' call to heal wounds and warm hearts, and also Br Peter Carroll's question to Plenary "What do we say to the wounded and when?" – we need to re-engage with several generations of lost women to build any sort of foundation for the better inclusion and participation of women in the Church. Many women have left the Church feeling unwelcome and unworthy. Whether or not we agree with all of the issues they raise, we should never have abandoned our women over issues of family planning, divorce, mixed marriages, participation or the impacts of the child abuse offending. This must never happen again. We need to stand by all the faithful, even when we disagree.

And we need to redress the loss of this great spiritual gene pool.

I wish to propose an annual Liturgy of Lament and Welcome to be conducted nationally for five years including the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion specifically directed at re-engagement and ongoing communication with women and their families and loved ones.

I propose every parish participates plus we stream the Liturgy into communities and homes across this nation. I propose first, that we host a Third Rite of Reconciliation for women and for our Church within a Liturgy of Lament. It would also be an opportunity for the Church to make women feel genuinely welcome again and worthy of their joyful re-joining of the Church community.

This would be followed closely (perhaps a week or a fortnight later) by a Communion of Welcome along the theme of Communion as the food of Mercy. The Liturgy would be repeated each year for five years.

This is not just symbolic. I see it sending a clear and repeated message of welcome to our lost women and to their families and loved ones. Parishes would also be encouraged to engage in their own local activities in support of this initiative throughout the period.

I believe the grace from this initiative would bear fruit in welcoming women back to the Sacraments.

► **PROPOSAL 37**

**IDENTIFY AND INVESTIGATE A FULL LIST OF EXISTING FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES AND THEIR OFFERINGS**

There are opportunities in many dioceses, universities and theologates — some of them rather buried — for adult formation. Some of these perhaps need additional support, resources, or profile. Creating knowledge of what is available, what is good about it and what needs to be improved would be a reasonable first step before producing costly alternatives.

*Instrumentum Laboris* Reference: Lay people leading/ serving “internally” in the Church (126, 73, 132), Need of formation (49)

**BACKGROUND**

Proposals for consideration in the light of small group prayer and experience.

► **PROPOSAL 38**

**ACCOMPANYING MARRIED COUPLES IN PARISHES**

That more support for education, ongoing formation and accompaniment be offered through parishes throughout Australia, for married couples.

**BACKGROUND**

Interventions about the struggles, importance and beauty of marriage have been prevalent throughout the Plenary Council so far. The domestic Church needs support in this specific area. This would also support the Marriage Catechumenate proposed by another member of the Plenary Council.

► **PROPOSAL 39**

**RECOGNITION OF SINGLE PEOPLE**

That the Church in Australia promote ministries specifically for single people in the Church that are not connected to youth ministry or family ministry, but rather recognise people who are not married as making a unique contribution to the Church.

**BACKGROUND**

Single people offer much to the Church but are sometimes “lost” in the mix between youth and family ministry.

► **PROPOSAL 40**

**FORMATION OF LAY LEADERS**

That the Catholic Church in Australia promote existing or new centres of formation in ethics, politics, journalism, education, health and aged care, social services, the professions, and pastoral care where lay leaders are prepared for the future with a sound understanding of Catholic social teaching, faith and morals, pastoral and spiritual perspectives, identity, and mission. Local parishes, Catholic professional associations and other groups can also assist and support people in living their baptismal vocation in the world.

**BACKGROUND**

Ensuring good formation for our lay collaborators.

► **PROPOSAL 41**

**SCHOOLS OF EVANGELISATION**

That the Plenary Council expresses the need for more schools of evangelisation, training young people in the proclamation of the Gospel in contemporary culture, and imparting skills for making disciples and building Christian community within our various ecclesial contexts.

**BACKGROUND**

I have been involved in training young people (18-30 years old) in evangelisation and discipleship for many years and have seen enormous fruit. In these faith-filled contexts young people open their hearts to God and discover his mission for the world today. They become highly motivated to share their faith with others and gain the tools to be able to do this with sensitivity and compassion.

► **PROPOSAL 42**

**MINISTRY OF CATECHIST**

Advance the Ministry of Catechist as instituted by Pope Francis in his motu proprio, *Antiquum Ministerium* (10 May 2021).

**BACKGROUND**

I think this offers new possibilities for the effective transmission of the faith.

► *PROPOSAL 43*

*SCHOOL OF CANON LAW*

Establish a school or faculty of Church law at an appropriate Catholic higher education institution for the formation and development of Church personnel.

**BACKGROUND**

Church law is deeply connected with issues of governance. If more people are to be involved in Church governance in a co-responsible way then formation in Church law will be a major assistance.

► *PROPOSAL 44*

*THE BAPTISMAL CALL*

Promote ministries specifically for single people in the Church that are not connected to youth ministry or family ministry, but rather recognises people who are not married as making a unique contribution to the Church.

**BACKGROUND**

Our census data shows us that more and more Australians are still single at the age of 35. Some will go on to marry, but many will not. Our current model of youth ministry offers little for those who are over 25 and have entered the workforce. Yet the listening and discernment of the Council shows that lay Catholics are yearning for more opportunities to be committed to ministry in the Church, to have a voice in government, and to be part of authentic discipleship communities. They need more than a sign-up sheet; they need structures which will invite them to discern their personal charisms and put them into action, in partnership with the clergy and with other like-minded adults. Like Mary MacKillop with Fr Tenison Woods, they are waiting for us to call them on, to lead them out of the boat and into a supported, service-oriented community of missionary disciples. Jesus' call is demanding. The grace of Baptism needs to be unleashed. Do we ask enough of our single, lay Catholics?

► *PROPOSAL 45*

*FORMATION FOR VOCATION*

That the Church in Australia commit to form Christians with an adult faith, who can then discern their vocation to marriage, priesthood, or the single life, and live that vocation in its fullness in the

Christian community.

## **BACKGROUND**

Interventions on formation for vocations were made throughout the Assembly, including by the seconder of this motion.

### **► PROPOSAL 46**

#### ***CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE AUSTRALIA***

That the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia recognises the contribution of the Catholic Women's League Australia to the welfare of women and others in vulnerable situations for more than 100 years and congratulates the members of CWLA for being a voice for women in the Church in Australia and beyond.

## **BACKGROUND**

As members of the Catholic Women's League, we think this is an important recognition for the Plenary Council to make.

## Question Nine:

**How might we better equip ordained ministers to be enablers of missionary discipleship: the Church becoming more a “priestly people” served by the ordained ministry?**

### **SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT**

#### ▶ **SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS**

- That we utilise existing documents and research, such as the *Ratio [Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis]* from the Vatican and the [2014 *Ratio Nationalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of the] ACBC, to articulate the personal characteristics required for contemporary ordained ministry, emphasising those traits which are most urgently needed to enable missionary discipleship in a modern Australian context.
- That we consider a future motion to fund a research project on the best pre-and post-ordination formation examples from various groups overseas, so that we can learn from global Catholic experience. Other cultures and nations include different models and experiments in clergy formation programs.
- That the Council commission to review and identify elements in the current formation of seminarians that are positive and valuable, and elements that are not meeting the needs of our community and mission and may be barriers to that mission. That a research project be undertaken to identify international models of seminary pre-ordination formation programs and lifelong formation that have had proven and demonstrated successful outcomes that could be adapted for the Australian Church. That the Catholic Church in Australia declare a Year of Prayer for Vocations.
- Commit to renewing vocational awareness at the parish, diocesan and national level. Promoting vocations is a task for all Members of the Church and we must use every opportunity for prayer, formation, and accompaniment of vocations to marriage, priesthood, consecrated life and the baptismal vocation in the world. A renewed focus on the vocations could be assisted by a Year of Prayer for Vocations.
- That the Catholic Church in Australia establish national and local advocates for each of marriage, priesthood, religious life and the universal vocation of the baptised.

- That the Catholic Church in Australia recognises that family life in Australia today is not well understood and supported, that all too many marriages end in divorce, and that many families are suffering various kinds of stress. That dioceses in Australia commit to creating opportunities for single, lay Catholics to be committed in ministry, a genuine lay apostolate that fosters community, which is different from young adult or family ministry.
- That the Catholic Church in Australia promote existing or new centres of formation in ethics, politics, journalism, education, health and aged care, social services, the professions, and pastoral care where lay leaders are prepared for the future with a sound understanding of Catholic social teaching, faith and morals, pastoral and spiritual perspectives, identity and mission. Identify and investigate a full list of existing formation opportunities and their offerings, rather than creating new institutes of formation.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- Ordination of married men was raised and the question of eligibility for ordination in general must be considered by this Plenary Council.
- Overlap between this question on governance for the purpose of evangelisation and Questions 8, 6 and 14 must be noted by the Plenary Council. The expert advice found that canon law supported the ordination of women to the diaconate.

### **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

#### **► PROPOSAL 47**

#### **VOCATION AWARENESS**

To assist young people in vocation discernment and to form leaders for mission, the Church in Australia commit to renewing vocational awareness at the parish, diocesan, and national level through opportunities for prayer, formation, and accompaniment. This initiative will culminate in a Year of Prayer for Vocations (to marriage, priesthood, consecrated life, and the baptismal vocation in the world).

#### **BACKGROUND**

To become a more prayerful Church that looks toward forming leaders for mission, I ask that the

Church in Australia commit to promoting vocations to marriage, the priesthood, consecrated life, and the baptismal vocation in the world. This initiative will strengthen people's Christian identity; provide hope in the future; challenge and encourage young people in a committed response to Jesus' personal call in their life; and support sustained and fruitful mission in the life of the Church. In a society where people are drawn in many directions and discouraged from such commitments and self-giving, a renewed commitment to vocation will be a powerful sign of our mission and identity in our Church and in our world.

### ► **PROPOSAL 48**

#### ***THAT WE RESUME THE USE OF WOMEN DEACONS TO FURTHER THE MISSION OF GOSPEL PROCLAMATION AND PASTORAL SERVICE TO THE WORLD***

That this Plenary endorse the work of the International Theological Commission (2002) and petition to Pope Francis (2020) that women be introduced into that aspect of pastoral and liturgical service and ministry that is the diaconate.

The Church has had the ministry of women deacons in the past, so there is a precedent in Church Tradition. This is not to be understood as a first step to priestly ordination, since the diaconate is of a different order to priestly and episcopal ordination in which the ordained minister is configured to Christ, the Head of the Church.

The Catholic Church, from its origins, has been structured in nature: we could refer to it as an "ordered communion". By the second century, its oversight was three-fold, although what was meant by Bishop, Elder, and Deacon is still developing. In the early centuries, it is clear that women were part of that structure as deacons, a role that had several aspects and missionary activities. In order for the achievement of our overall mission, I propose that the Plenary Council endorse Pope Francis' commission to study the possible role of women deacons.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Our mission is to proclaim the Gospel. Reinstating women deacons allows for women to preach and will give a chance to broaden our understanding of the Gospel through the female contribution to this ministry and service, as well as enhance Church leadership through the inclusion of women in its organisation and ministry. We need to be inclusive, flexible, and open to the feedback, comments and discernment seeking the greater inclusion of women for the benefit of the Church.

### ► **PROPOSAL 49**

## **ORDINATION**

That the Plenary Council affirm the all-Male Diaconate and Priesthood as taught by the Laws of the Church

## **BACKGROUND**

I have felt called due to the fact that Christ chose men to be ordained and the Church has always taught this.

## Question Ten:

How might formation, both pre- and post-ordination, better foster the development of bishops, priests and deacons as enablers of the universal Christian vocation to holiness lived in missionary discipleship?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► *CALLING, FORMING AND SUPPORTING OF DEACONS, PRIESTS AND BISHOPS IN SERVICE OF THE COMMUNITY OF MISSIONARY DISCIPLES CALLED TO HOLINESS*

Several themes coalesced in our discussion and indeed there is some overlap between the two questions that our channel was discussing. Those themes revolve around the missionary dimension of the Church in relation to the continuous formation of the ordained; the need for transparency and accountability to that end; the recognition of the interweaving of all vocations and charisms of the Church to that end; the needs for formation in preaching and teaching for all the baptised; the cross pollination with and within the rites of the Eastern Churches and with and within the rites of the Latin Church.

Proposal for stages of seminarian and priest formation:

- Pre-Ordination:
  - *Vocation/Selection.* That the gift of the call to ordination be recognised in the preparation of candidates prior to entering the seminary.
  - That there be national standards and processes of accompaniment of those seeking to be accepted to be formed for ordination.
  - That vocation promoters and committees seek to understand young people and their culture; be aware of the social, psychological and family issues that may affect discernment; collaborate with other members of the Church in promoting vocations; to discern a candidate's kerygmatic desire.
  - That acceptance of a candidate includes consulting with laity for affirmation of a candidate's suitability.
- Propaedeutic year (PY)
  - That consideration be given to a single national centre and program for the propaedeutic

year.

- Studies and Formation
  - That opportunities for joint formation with the baptised in all types of vocations (lay, married, religious, catechists, lectors, acolytes) be made with the purpose of a holistic formation for missionary discipleship. This would enable an appreciation for different vocations and charisms within the Church.
  - That Latin seminarians have a comprehensive education in relation to the Eastern Rites, with their own distinctiveness, and that this continues post-seminary.
  - That Eastern seminarians who have studied in their country of origin be immersed and embraced within the Church in Australia.
  - That all seminarians experience cultural traditions other than their own.
  - The requirements of the permanent diaconate need specific attention.
- Post-Ordination:
  - That a national structure of support for newly ordained be established, including leadership formation, ongoing spiritual formation and mentoring, professional upskilling, including working with people.
  - That the placement of ordained within different faith communities consider the needs and gifts of both.
  - That the secondment of ordained ministers be considered to the Military Ordinariate as a pathway for post-ordination development.
  - That Priests arriving from overseas be immersed and embraced in the Church in Australia and not attempt to replicate the Church in their country of origin.
  - That a way of discernment for accepting the call to be ordained as a bishop be developed.
  - The reconstitution of the clergy life and support ministry.
  - That we are particularly attentive to the formation needs of the ordained who are married.
  - That attention be given to accountability defined within a standards framework, in support of ministerial review.
  - Attention needs to be given to the support and formation of newly ordained bishops, as well as all bishops.

## PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

### ► PROPOSAL 50

#### RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE BEST PRE-AND POST-ORDINATION FORMATION EXAMPLES FROM OVERSEAS

That the Church in Australia fund a research project on the best pre-and post-ordination formation examples from overseas, so that we can learn from global Catholic experience.

Other cultures and nations include different models and experiments in clergy formation programs. Rather than simply trying to “select” intuitively or as a matter of personal preference what we would like to see, this should be based on evidence, study, and reflection — all of which then needs to be tested in the Australian context. The Church in Australia should form its priests on at least as sound a basis as any other nation, which requires research and knowledge of what is done elsewhere, what works and what does not.

*Instrumentum Laboris* Reference: Formation and support of clergy (121)

#### BACKGROUND

Proposals for consideration in light of small group prayer and experience.

## Question Eleven:

### How might parishes better become local centres for the formation and animation of missionary disciples?

#### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

##### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

In our spiritual conversations there was passion and conviction about the central call from Baptism for all members of a parish to be missionary disciples, sustained by living daily a relationship with Christ nourished by prayer and being engaged in formation programs. It was discerned that a parish truly growing with missionary disciples would be a beacon of light of Christ's transforming love, mercy, and healing for all in her community and for all in her surrounding locality and context.

##### OTHER OBSERVATIONS

To care for and honour what already is essential and good in our parishes while seeking new ways for our parishes to live out their mission.

From discernment the themes of language, formation, leadership, and the context into which we are reaching out in mission were raised for ongoing discussion.

Other themes raised included:

- The Church's mission to refugees and asylum-seekers;
- Single adults and their inclusion and role in the parish mission.

There is a possibility to work outside the box to find new ways to support clergy and parishioners to come on board to help their parish grow to be a centre of missionary disciples.

Finally, it was shared in our group that the Holy Spirit through Pope Francis has unleashed the call to mission of the Church that cannot be put back into a bottle. In their call to be missionary hubs, parishes are being called be centres nourished by Christ in the Eucharist and to be "Eucharist" to those hungering for him in the world.

## ► *SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS*

That a leadership support team could be established in each parish, large or small, including the parish priest and to assist him in leading his parish to become more missionary. (This team should consist of well-formed lay leaders from the parish who, in their prayerful discerning and collaboration with the parish priest, would be responsible for nurturing the growth of the missionary culture in the parish. The team would also serve the need in continuity of the parish's vision and mission with the appointment and transition of a new parish priest. A document authorised by the local bishop could be drawn up to offer guidance for the parish priest regarding the benefits and process in the establishment of this team and its collaborative role with other established parish councils and committees.)

- That programs for parish renewal currently being used in several dioceses and parishes across Australia be researched for their effectiveness and fruits, taking note of the different contexts and localities and sizes of parishes. (Their effectiveness in sustaining and retaining of parishioners in the mission of the parish should also be considered. Those programs found to be effective and fruitful should then be promoted and made more widely available and supported on both a diocesan and parish level according to suitability to the parish context. (For example: Divine Renovation – Maintenance to Missional Parishes/Go and Make Disciples - Sydney Archdiocese and others).)
- To support parishes in commencing programs of renewal to become centres for the formation and animation of missionary disciples our group discerned a grave need for the ongoing formation of clergy, and for lay members of the parish as well as seminarians for their future priestly role to serve and lead in missionary parishes:
  - That parish forums be part of the first phase of a parish beginning the journey of becoming a centre of missionary disciples. (A parish forum to encourage dialogue with parishioners regarding the renewed vision and mission of the parish was seen as an important step especially in the early phase before the commencement of a renewal program. The forum could be a space for parishioners to enter a first conversation to grow in understanding of their baptismal call to be missionary disciples of Christ.)
  - That small groups made up of different groups of parishioners for example youth, families, children, married couples, single adults etc. be established following models already in the Church here in Australia or those modelled on groups from Church in other parts of the world (E.g., Basic Ecclesial Communities). (These small groups provide a more supporting space for prayer, formation, fellowship, and mission animation. It was agreed a small group setting allows for conversations of faith sharing that are integral to faith formation and hearing the call to mission. It was discerned that the small group setting strengthens a sense of belonging and is a “structure” that helps parish

members stay connected to Christ, their parish community and to be sustained in their commitment to ongoing formation and growing as missionary disciples.)

## **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- Need to engage people online as an initial encounter but then identify the process between online encounter and real-life relationships, e.g. in the parish.
- Offering some case studies. What do we admire? Creation of Catholic voices; look at French religious movements that have had a re-evangelisation of parishes.
- How can we offer studies of how renewal has taken place in other places? Translate into our discussions and offer a way forward.
- The Instruction on *The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*, of the Congregation for the Clergy, 20 July 2020.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### ► PROPOSALS 51

#### **PARISHES DEVELOPING A MISSIONARY ORIENTATION**

- That parishes embrace the vision of becoming centres for the formation and animation of missionary disciples. To achieve this parishes take the decision to become missionary communities.
- That parishes develop a mission team separate from parish council (see *Instrumentum Laboris* 130-131). That parishes explore the establishing of small groups which provide prayer, formation and missionary orientation (see *Instrumentum Laboris* 132).

#### **BACKGROUND**

Our small group discussed this idea at length and a number of members had experience of this and supported the concept.

► **PROPOSAL 52**

**RESEARCH INTO SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES IN PASTORAL COMMUNITIES**

Commission new research in Australia into the activity of places (dioceses, parishes, orders, movements, chaplaincies) with highest levels of Mass attendance, participation in the sacramental life beyond school and support of pastors — so as to determine successful strategies and to learn from others' experience.

Thought could be given to a specific focus on Eastern rites and other communities anecdotally thought to be flourishing.

*Instrumentum Laboris*: Sacramental and prayer life-renewal n. 135.

Member intervention: Archbishop Nona.

**BACKGROUND**

Proposals for consideration in the light of small group prayer and experience.

► **PROPOSAL 53**

**RESEARCH INTO FEATURES OF PARISHES, DIOCESES, RELIGIOUS ORDERS, PJP'S AND COMMUNITIES WHERE MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IS THRIVING**

Fund a research project aimed at assessing the best global research into features of parishes, dioceses, religious orders, PJP's and communities where missionary activity is thriving, particularly in the involvement of youth and families.

The purpose would be to avoid introspection and maintenance mode and to gain a true and realistic basis for proposals about what will increase the chances of greater missionary activity in the Church in Australia.

*Instrumentum Laboris*: Parish: school of holiness and evangelisation (131), n133.

**BACKGROUND**

Proposals for consideration in the light of small group prayer and experience.

► **PROPOSAL 54**

**CONNECTING SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, AND PARISHES**

That initiatives be designed for schools to provide formation opportunities for parents as part of

their mission.

That initiatives be designed that connect Catholic students and their families with their local parishes.

In accord with the evangelising task of the Church, we propose that initiatives be designed to support parents in their role as primary educators in the faith, to strengthen the faith of parents, to connect families with the parish, and to strengthen the life of the parish.

## **BACKGROUND**

The family is the “first and vital cell of society” (*Familiaris Consortio* 42) and the domestic Church (*Lumen Gentium* 11). Catholic schools affirm that parents are the first educators of their children. Our schools exist to support, and not replace, parents in this important task (*Gravissimum Educationis* 3). At the same time, we acknowledge the cultural challenges to faith and family that exist today and the decline of faith practice in some places.

### **► PROPOSAL 55**

#### **PARISH REGISTRATION AND PASTORAL GROWTH**

That the Catholic Church in Australia establishes the requirement for formal and detailed registration of all the faithful in parishes, extending beyond contact details and financial contributions to meaningful records of their pastoral and spiritual lives, needs and gifts.

Based on this information, clergy and pastoral teams might better serve the pastoral needs of the faithful, and the faithful would be encouraged and supported to grow in faith and engagement with the life of their community. From such platforms parishes might more easily build teams for RCIA, catechesis, Divine Renovation or Intentional Discipleship, Catholic Alpha and other parish renewal programs.

## **BACKGROUND**

For the purpose of parish renewal.

### **► PROPOSAL 56**

#### **PARISHES: STRUCTURES AT THE SERVICE OF MISSION**

That the Church offer opportunities for prayer in parishes across Australia such as First Friday and First Saturday devotions, novenas, and the regular recitation of the Rosary. Further, to assist in the rebuilding of a Catholic culture, we ask that the Church in Australia renew the practice of Friday

fasting and abstinence and that family prayer and seasonal rituals be promoted to families through parishes and schools.

## **BACKGROUND**

The celebration of Mass is the highest form of worship, the source of our spiritual joy, the summit of our parish life, the meeting place of heaven and earth. But it is not for everyone. Those who are not yet baptised may prayerfully observe, but they are unable to participate fully. Those who are not in full communion with the Church can join us in worship, but not at the Lord's table. The seekers, the lost, the questioning, the returning – all should find a welcome at our parishes, but not all will be able to immediately feel at home in the mystery of the liturgy.

Our parish structures, therefore, if they are to be structures at the service of mission, must be more than a schedule of Sunday Masses. Family outreach must be more than a sacraments of initiation program. Lay involvement must be more than being a lector or acolyte.

We can learn from the success of the Eastern rite churches in Australia. To be a parish is to share a rhythm of life. Times of feasting and fasting; monthly devotions; novena prayers; cyclical Bible studies.... These rhythms are deeply biblical and are rooted in ancient traditions. They are enculturated, with varying expressions incorporating the best of local language, culture and customs, and yet also cross-cultural, uniting Catholics across rites and languages.

Most importantly for our time, liturgical devotion is counter-cultural. Infusing the hours of the day, the days of the week and the months of the year with spiritual significance helps our faith to overflow out of Sunday Mass and into our daily lives. Practices like the Angelus, the hour of mercy, ember days and family Rosary equip Catholics with a clear identity and opportunities to visibly witness to their faith in front of colleagues, extended family and even strangers.

The listening and dialogue sessions sent a clear message to our Council. Australians have a deep desire to pray, but do not feel confident or know where to begin. While the importance of contemplation cannot be overstated, vocal prayer and traditional devotions provide a scaffolding by which the uncertain or the beginner can begin to construct the cathedral of the heart.

We need parish structures to be renewed for mission by reclaiming the rhythm of the liturgical week and year. We must rediscover our rich heritage of sacred time, and reclaim a visible Christian identity, in order to be missionary disciples who preach first by their lives, and then by their words.

## Question Twelve:

How might the Church in Australia be better structured for mission, considering the parish, the diocese, religious orders, the PJPs and new communities?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

These are already above.

### AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS

- Restructuring of dioceses needs to be considered.
- Inequality between metropolitan and regional and remote dioceses must be considered in the implementation of recommendations from *The Light from the Southern Cross*.

### PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

#### ► PROPOSAL 57

#### **DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCILS**

Commission a report on the theological foundations and role of diocesan pastoral councils, as first envisaged by the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Roman pronouncements and law, identifying what may be learned from existing or past diocesan pastoral councils, and setting forth a vision for the contribution of the pastoral council to planning the life and mission of the diocese.

#### BACKGROUND

As we are in group 8 looking at governance, diocesan pastoral councils have been mentioned and we wish to look at the theological foundations regarding them.

## ► PROPOSAL 58

### **RELIGIOUS LIFE AS A MODEL FOR REBUILDING "COMMUNITY"**

To commission research and consultation with active and dynamic religious communities in Australia as a starting point towards a more practical sense of community towards rebuilding communities within our Church.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The community structure of religious institutes was referred to as a model for renewal several times during our discussions. It was also brought up many times as a sign of unity in diversity which invokes the *Instrumentum Laboris* 89.

## ► PROPOSAL 59

### **YOUTH MINISTRY**

1. To support the evangelising mission of the Church and to properly respond to the need of young people today, commission research into effective youth ministry programs and initiatives in Australia and overseas and use the results to inform implementation of programs at the parish and diocesan levels.
2. That the Plenary Council affirms the importance of international, national and local youth gatherings, not just as part of youth ministry but also in response to the secular culture's tendency to try to draw young people away from faith.

#### **BACKGROUND**

To ensure the needs of young people are put at the forefront of the life of the Church.

## ► PROPOSAL 60

### **INVOLVING VIBRANT RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN CATHOLIC CHAPLAINCIES**

**Invite religious orders and those in forms of consecrated life** into Catholic chaplaincies to provide dynamic and authentic witness of life in communion as a basis for outreach.

Flourishing and authentic institutes of religious men and women provide a vital model of community for young people in a culture which champions isolation and individualism. I propose that thriving religious orders, as well as other appropriate forms of consecrated life, be approached and invited into Catholic chaplaincies to provide dynamic and authentic witness of life in communion as a basis for outreach.

**BACKGROUND**

I felt moved to propose this as a fruit of our small group discussions on renewing models of formation for young people and providing them with examples of harmonious relationships as noted in the *Instrumentum Laboris* 52.

▶ **PROPOSAL 61****RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Undertake a study on the future of consecrated life in this country and ways it might be renewed and promoted.

**BACKGROUND**

Due to the decline in religious life.

▶ **PROPOSAL 62****PRACTICAL PASTORAL INITIATIVES**

That the ACBC would consider the boundaries of Australian dioceses with a view to preparing a proposal that would promote a more effective use of human and material resources for mission. This proposal would then be presented to the Holy See for consideration and action.

**BACKGROUND**

It would put the Church on a more missionary footing responding to changed ecclesial realities from when dioceses were set up.

## Question Thirteen:

**How might the People of God, lay and ordained, women and men, approach governance in the spirit of synodality and co-responsibility for more effective proclamation of the Gospel?**

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

The group affirmed:

- The purpose of governance is to serve the proclamation of the Gospel.
- We approach governance with a spirit of humility.
- Mature faith leaders are essential for governance, they must have a heart for mission, therefore formation is crucial (including this Plenary Council experience).
- Culture will destroy/enable governance structures.
- Quality of leadership is paramount.
- Governance is a service, a way of ordering things for the community, it is for the people.
- Relationships must be the focus and are at the heart of synodality.
- Synodality is based on communion with each other: lay and ordained walking together and listening deeply.
- We already have good lay people in governance, and there are examples of equal partnership between lay and ordained, however this is not universal.
- The *Light from the Southern Cross* report is a resource that needs to be tapped into.
- Governance must be fit for purpose; it must suit the context for what is being governed (parish, schools, ministerial PJPs, diocese).
- Good governance in parishes is where the intersection of lay and ordained, and women and men, takes place; and this affects the everyday life of the People of God. A key issue is that the centre of gravity for governance is presently around the individual parish priest; and the *Light from the Southern Cross* report contains some strong recommendations relating to this and changes that could be beneficial.

## ▶ SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

- That Canons 127 and 129 be explored, particularly regarding the section on unanimity and consensus to ask whether consensus can be brought into legislation.
- That councils, particularly at the parish level (e.g., finance and pastoral), be given a deliberative vote rather than a consultative vote “on all matters”.
- That between now and the next assembly we look at *Lumen Gentium* (and other relevant Vatican II documents) and use them to assess how we are already practising synodality and co-responsibility and expose any gaps.
- Identify the main principles for forming hearts for service.

(This could offer the opportunity to explore the nexus between “sacred power” and “sacred orders”. Lay people already exercise this power, but could we improve this through legislation?)

Perhaps we need to recast “power” around “service”: the laity and ordained are called to *serve* the People of God and the world. While civil society thinks of governance in terms of power, the root of governance, in the Catholic understanding, is service rather than power. Christ washes the feet of his apostles before he gives us the ultimate gift of love. If we work in the spirit of synodality, love must come before power.)

### NOTE

Within the group some Members expressed the view that they found it difficult to journey together, to be co-responsible, when gender exclusive language is used. These Members expressed a desire to address and change Church language that excludes.

We need to find ways to provide a more prominent place for the voice of women in governance structures.

Within our group detailed expert opinion was sought relating to the ordination of women to the diaconate, as a way to expand governance. No consensus was reached by the group on this point.

## **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- Eastern Churches, First Nations peoples provide great resources for understanding synodality.
- The divorced and remarried, and young people must be considered as we approach governance.

- ACBC have independent lay people at the table as full voting members.
- LGBTQI people must be considered as part of synodality.
- Can we find places for First Nations peoples in our governance structures?
- Collegiality and cooperation between dioceses should be promoted and supported by the ACBC.
- Ministerial PJPs must have strong, healthy working relationships with the dioceses in which their ministries operate.
- A response to *The Light of the Southern Cross* report must be considered by this Plenary Council, as well as the various entities responses to the report, e.g., Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia, Ministerial Public Juridic Persons.
- The group noted that in response to *The Light of the Southern Cross* report, the Parramatta Diocese commissioned and accepted its own wide-ranging and thorough governance review, which was tabled in our group and is in the process of implementation.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### **► PROPOSAL 63**

#### **PRINCIPLES OF SYNODALITY**

That this Plenary Council provide a statement for the People of God in which it clearly states that every position open to the laity is open to women in the Church. At the same time, an affirmation that our apostolic Church depends on male ordained ministry can be re-affirmed. Finally, the importance of lay men and women, at the heart of the domestic Church, needs to be re-affirmed. The theological anthropology that is part of the treasure of the Church is rich and in need of promulgation in all of these areas.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In group 8 on question 13, we prayerfully discerned the principles of synodality and I found that these were misunderstood or not known by many.

## ► PROPOSAL 64

### **LISTING OF GOVERNANCE AND PROMINENT LEADERSHIP ROLES IN ALL PARTS OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA ALREADY AVAILABLE FOR THE LAITY, AND HIGHLIGHT THE CASES IN WHICH WOMEN HOLD THESE ROLES**

Compose a full listing of governance and prominent leadership roles in all parts of the Church in Australia already available for the laity, and highlight the cases in which women hold these roles.

The rationale is that there is strong agreement in the Plenary that women should occupy senior governance roles and be highly visible in decision-making. There is an assumption that the laity generally have less voice than they should in many aspects of Church leadership and governance. Before we can move this matter forward, we need to start with the facts of where we are presently. A proper account should be produced across all rites, eparchies, dioceses, congregations, Public Juridic Persons, movements and parishes.

*Instrumentum Laboris* Reference: Lay people leading and serving 'internally' in the Church (126, 73, 132): Participation in governance structures.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Proposals for consideration in light of small group prayer and experience.

## ► PROPOSAL 65

### **CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN GOVERNANCE**

That the Catholic Church in Australia encourage that those in governance of Catholic health, education and social services agencies meet more regularly with those in governance in chanceries, so that bishops, priests and laity who exercise roles of governance in the Church do so in a collaborative and co-responsible manner.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Our group has providentially been discussing governance and mission, in two questions. The connection between the governance roles in dioceses and the governance roles in Catholic agencies, clerical and lay, seemed to be clear and we thought this was a good way to bring the two governance models together.

► *PROPOSAL 66*

**GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES**

That the Catholic Church in Australia ensures that all Public Juridic Persons (PJPs) are well connected to the local Church in which they minister, including a delegate of the local ordinary on the governing or advisory board.

**BACKGROUND**

To ensure good governance practices.

► *PROPOSAL 67*

**THE DIOCESAN SYNOD**

That every Australian diocese would hold a diocesan synod at least every 10 years, the first being within three years of the conclusion of this Plenary Council.

**BACKGROUND**

This is a practical governance reform that responds to the call for greater participation of lay people in the governance of the Church. It ultimately will make local Churches more sensitive and better equipped to respond to local needs.

## Question Fourteen:

**How might we recast governance at every level of the Church in Australia in a more missionary key?**

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

All dioceses and agencies should adopt the process of discernment and spiritual conversation as part of their normal governance *modus governandi*. We need to support our leaders, including by developing modes of shared leadership ("How do we care for our leaders when they get tired? They should not have to feel that they need to always be at the front.")

Leadership teams in parishes, dioceses, social services, could model themselves on what we are doing here: grounding ourselves in the word, listening to the voices we are meant to listen to, giving them a voice at the table, and be led where we are meant to go.

Leaders of key agencies should connect more frequently with leaders within the dioceses— shared leadership, recognising we have a shared mission; come together in prayer like we have these last few days.

Our governance needs to be underpinned by a commitment to self-criticism and continuous review, adjustment and improvement. If we had had that, we never would have ended up in the situation we heard about in the Royal Commission. If we had a deep-seated culture of continuous improvement that was collaborative and listened to lots of different voices, what a powerhouse we would be.

We need to honour and utilise the voices and gifts of the people of God; not just the ordained nor a narrow definition of practising Catholics — this includes listening to and learning from Indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, other faiths, and the culture in which we are situated; be in dialogue with the world, not sitting in judgment of it.

We should not see the principles of civil governance as at odds with the Church, we should be in the world, not at odds with it. We need to adopt the principles of transparency, participation, accountability and listening as these ensure that power is exercised fairly.

We need to have more grace in the world in our theology — less dualistic language in the liturgy. We are a church *in* not *of* the world. Review language in the liturgy in light of theology about this.

We need to listen to, learn from and work with other faiths. (Note: In terms of those feeling excluded from the Church, this should include those who are divorced and remarried.)

Our group noted *The Light from the Southern Cross* report recommendations on recasting governance (and the various responses to this report).

### ► SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

That the Plenary Council develop a Governance framework for the whole of the Church in Australia, based on best practice from the corporate and community environment and informed by scriptural reflection and canonical tradition.

To assist in this process, consideration can be given to the *Light from the Southern Cross* report, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) response to the report and responses from Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) and Association of Ministerial PjPs (AMPjP). To guide this process, principles be developed which include the articulation of our mission, discipleship, prayer and Christ-centredness.

Engage a diverse group of qualified and experienced people to implement a structure and robust system of oversight, professional development and accountability for all levels of church leadership including priests, bishops, CEOs of agencies and lay management staff consistent with existing church law.

Each diocese, eparchy, religious congregation and Church agency should adopt an intentionally synodal *modus operandi* including the practice of discernment and spiritual conversation, and requisite formation should be required.

Governance structures at all levels need to avoid/prevent power imbalances inherent in hierarchical structures and ensure they give real voice to lay people especially LGBTIQ people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They also need to reflect our commitment to the continual improvement of Church governance so that we may be bearers of Christ's love to those entrusted to our care.

That the Catholic Church in Australia encourage that those in governance of Catholic agencies meet more regularly with those in governance in chanceries, so that bishops, priests and laity who exercise roles of governance in the Church do so in a collaborative and co-responsible manner.

That the Catholic Church in Australia ensures that all Public Juridic Persons (PJPs) are well connected to the local Church in which they minister. This might include input from dioceses in appointments to PJP board (Note: This was not a consensus view).

That the Council take whatever steps are within its power to ensure that women are given more than advisory participation in parish and diocesan leadership. That the Church continue to examine the possibility of a female diaconate as was indicated by Pope Francis after his reception of the report. Can the Plenary Council enquire as to the status of the Commission's work? (Note: There were divergent views on this proposal).

Develop governance structures which ensure the principles of accountability, transparency and inclusion are applied to all leadership and decision-making in the Church, with women to be included in every place where decisions are made.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- Question of governance: A linkage with other small groups, increasingly secular corporatisation of the institutions of education, leading to institutions lacking the Gospel.
- It would be helpful for our future governance if the distinction between Canon Law and Common Law was communicated with and understood by the People of God.

### **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

#### ► **PROPOSAL 68**

#### **FORMATION FOR LAY PEOPLE SERVING AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF CHURCH AGENCIES OR ON GOVERNING AND ADVISORY BOARDS OF AGENCIES**

That the Catholic Church in Australia support the appropriate ongoing formation of those tasked with leading Catholic agencies and who serve on their governing or advisory boards (*Instrumentum Laboris* 49).

#### **BACKGROUND**

To ensure formation for our lay leaders.

► *PROPOSAL 69*

***BEST PRACTICE GOVERNANCE***

That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference would seek to investigate and provide best practice models or templates for parish pastoral councils, parish finance councils, diocesan pastoral councils and diocesan synods.

**BACKGROUND**

This is a practical governance reform that has great potential to advance the faith, morals and pastoral care of the People of God. It would give a greater clarity as to the governance remit of each of the bodies involved. It responds to what I have heard in groups.

## Question Fifteen:

How might we better see the future of Catholic education (primary, secondary and tertiary) through a missionary lens?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

The group engaged in rich discussion about the convergences appearing throughout the week. The fruits of our prayer and discernment can be surmised in the following themes:

#### RESOURCES GUIDING DISCUSSION:

Clear resources to guide future proposals suggested were:

- *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium.*
- *200 Years Young Pastoral Letter* and associated links.

#### ► SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

Establish a working group to respond to the themes of:

- Mission
- Witness
- Encounter
- The need for rich formation across the board; students, staff, leaders, families and catechists.
- The valued place of families; their role and relationship with school. (Education providers)
- A discussion around approaches to curriculum.
- We viewed Catholic education as “womb to tomb”; educating from birth and beyond.
- The need for our schools to be places of inclusivity and with a deep appreciation of our diversity.

- How can we be authentically Catholic?
- Ways we can promote nationwide sharing to support sustainability and sharing of resources and practices already in existence.
- The need for a nationwide vision for Catholic education.
- The promotion of the role and value of National Catholic Education Commission.
- Our schools as places of listening and dialogue.
- The experiences of schools as places of recontextualisation.
- Discussion around tertiary institutions and their role in supporting the formation of our adult population both Catholic and non-Catholic and pursuing courses not currently available that support the common good. Further, how can tertiary and secondary work together to build a bridge that supports our young people lost at this transition of life?
- An acknowledgement and clear celebration of Catholic education over the past 200 years; and consideration for how do we share the fruits of this story?
- Ways we can further strengthen partnerships between school, parish and other agencies. And in doing so develop healthy relationships with clergy between school and parish.
- Value and place of rich prayer experiences that allow students to encounter Christ.

and develop a clear roadmap for that response.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION NOMINATED BY SMALL GROUPS**

- The need to broaden the agenda question beyond institutions – the question limits Catholic education to primary, secondary and tertiary; it does not reflect the entire process of Catholic education.
- Resource to support this: Second Vatican Council documents on Catholic education.
- Leaders – we need to prioritise the formation of leaders in Catholic education in its broad sense to form leaders of faith to be leaders of Catholic communities.
- Affirmation of catechists and their role. Support of catechists, and diocesan and national agencies in their role within Catholic education. Given that half of the Catholic students in Australia attend public schools, formation, resourcing and networking of catechists through the National Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is crucial for this work to flourish across the nation.

- The role parents play in the future of Catholic education. Listen and engage our key stakeholders to listen to their desire for Catholic education.
- How can our schools allow for the integration of faith and life, faith and culture. An integrated approach, without it we miss out.
- Teacher training – could involve some element of working with other Church agencies.
- Parents as the first educators.
- Modes of education – social media.
- Diversity and identity – Eastern Churches. A crucial area to explore “Catholic” to take it to a universal understanding. The richness of diversity of schools providing education for both Roman and Eastern rites, how do we teach all in the same room? How do schools ensure sacramental programs support this diversity?
- Develop an understanding of who we are as Catholics in our welcoming statements and policies (e.g. enrolment) that reflects an understanding of Eastern Churches.
- Welcome – welcome that our practising Catholics feel in our schools, experiences of not feeling at home in a Catholic school.
- How can we welcome all without doing away with the welcome of Catholics?
- Discussion around the use of recontextualisation and the Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project.
- Sharing from members on their understanding, their experience and the use of the tool.
- Members also presented the concern for the use of this language and narrowing our focus to one project rather to explore various options.
- Discussion of the need to endorse and also further resource the significant leadership role of religious education coordinators.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### ► *PROPOSAL 70*

#### *FORMATION FOR MISSION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS*

- Develop an apologetics program, drawing on programs that already exist within Australia and internationally, where students learn what they believe and why. This would form the backbone of the religious education curriculum, particularly in Catholic secondary schools throughout Australia (a model for cooperation in this area already exists in NSW, with

Studies in Catholic Thought).

- Strengthen the public expectations on teachers and staff, with the publication of clear criteria aimed at hiring and retention of teachers and staff who are formed with hearts for mission.
- Dioceses develop targeted recruitment strategies for practising Catholic administrators, teachers, and staff, to advance the mission of Catholic schools and to strengthen Catholic identity.
- Dioceses provide initial and ongoing compulsory formation for all staff and those in senior leadership within Catholic schools.

## BACKGROUND

This proposal relates to questions 8 and 13 of the agenda. I have prayerfully discerned, based on my experience in Catholic education, as a Catholic mother, and my involvement with youth that we need to form our youth where they already are, in Catholic schools.

### ► PROPOSAL 71

#### CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

That we consider a future motion calling on Catholic schools and universities to draw explicitly upon Catholic intellectual tradition on God, nature, person and morality in developing programs of study, curriculum and research. Key resources include *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, *Gravissimum Educationis*, *Veritatis Gaudium*, *Educating to Fraternal Humanism*, and the Pastoral Letter: 200 Years Young.

*Instrumentum Laboris*: Catholic education: Identity and mission (41), n146.

## BACKGROUND

Proposals for consideration in the light of small group prayer and experience.

### ► PROPOSAL 72

#### CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

That Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrioms be established in each diocese and that Kinder-Year 2 teachers be trained in this method of catechesis as part of teaching in Catholics schools in Australia.

## BACKGROUND

As this religious education program has inspired the hearts of many in my own diocese, I wish this to be shared in all other dioceses across the nation to foster a love of God and his Church.

### ► *PROPOSAL 73*

#### *FOSTERING THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS*

- A renewal in devotion to Our Lady through practices such as May Crowning (May) and Rosary devotions (October), and daily recitation of the Angelus in all institutions. Further, at least a decade of the Rosary be recited each week by every student and leader/teacher in these institutions.
- A renewal in devotion to the Holy Eucharist in primary schools through the introduction of children's Eucharistic Adoration and, in secondary schools, weekly opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration.
- To experience the mercy and forgiveness of God, opportunities for the First Rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation be offered weekly.

## BACKGROUND

Catholics are called to be a praying people. To renew our call to mission and our Catholic identity, Catholic primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions are invited to renew their culture of devotion. We have a rich tradition to call upon to foster an authentic encounter with God. Further, we are a sacramental people. Opportunities for conversion through the sacraments is a vital element in the life of Catholic institutions.

### ► *PROPOSAL 74*

#### *PROMOTING CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCIES AS CENTRES FOR EVANGELISATION*

Promote and support our Catholic chaplaincies in universities by introducing more formation resources to enable youth mission teams to help students in areas of prayer and conversion.

## BACKGROUND

I feel the need to propose this motion as a fruit of our small group discussions. It was highlighted that one of the reasons chaplaincies work so well is that they are a community that people of all walks of life can be a part of and they give young people responsibilities within that community.

It requires commitment to sustain the ministry. This also links to the *Instrumentum Laboris* 41 on Catholic institutions as centres for evangelisation.

### ► PROPOSAL 75

#### PROMOTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCIES AND PARISHES

That university chaplaincies and parish communities collaborate so that students who are involved still feel part of the Church when then graduate. This would enable students to remain committed to and supported in their faith.

#### BACKGROUND

I felt moved to make this motion as it came from the fruit of our small group discussions in looking at ways to promote and revitalise parish life and a sense of belonging, ownership and community. This point also speaks into the *Instrumentum Laboris* 43.

### ► PROPOSAL 76

#### WORKING PARTY ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION

These ideas stem from my discernment of this week and my reflections on Church teaching, the thematic discernment papers of the Council and the working document (*Instrumentum Laboris*).

The following prompts have been key to discernment of the following proposal.

“Education is a dynamic reality; it is a movement that brings people to light.” Pope Francis, Plenary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, February 2020

“Catholic education at all levels plays a key role in enabling encounter of worldviews and perspectives in a quest for truth, wisdom and the common good” (*Instrumentum Laboris*, 159).

“Catholic schools are at once places of evangelisation, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds” (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*).

I propose we establish a working group that explores the development of a stronger national approach to Catholic education in Australia and an agreed approach to Catholic education at a national level.

This approach could mirror something like ACARA, where a national Australian curriculum was

developed but states interpreted it to their context.

This still allows for state involvement and leadership and acknowledges the deep contributions of Catholic Education Offices across the country but would seek to form a shared vision for religious education curriculum in particular so that we do not have 28 separate RE curriculums across the country. It would develop rich resources alongside states so there was a national resource hub for religious educators.

The view of this stronger national Catholic approach to education/religious education would:

- Address resource inequities across Australia.
- Respond to issues of sustainability and lack of resources.
- Provide a more accessible arena to share resources and programs that are evidence-based and are reflective of the Church's mission.
- Ensure students who move across states (and even across dioceses within their own state) are provided with similar learning experiences.

The priorities for this national Catholic approach would be to develop rich and meaningful formation programs for families, staff and students. A national agreement and support for certain ongoing, meaningful programs of formation could be explored.

A national agreement on formation could include but is not limited to, expectations of all staff for ongoing formation, expectation of leaders in Catholic schools to hold specific levels of further study in the area of theology or religious education.

Explore the role and potential of spiritual directors and formators in schools to develop richer experiences of prayer for staff to enable their witness to students.

A national body that is empowered to research and create a nationally agreed way in which our schools can implement an rich, meaningful pedagogical, approach to delivering Catholic curriculum that is not limited to the religious education classroom.

## **BACKGROUND**

Note: This is not a formal proposal as such but a proposal I put for discussion at a working party that could be develop to further unpack Catholic Education, and to provide the working party that may be formed an outline of my discernment of our prayers of the week.

## Question Sixteen:

How might we better see the future of Catholic social services, agencies and health and aged care ministries as key missionary and evangelising agencies?

### SMALL GROUP FINAL REPORT

#### ► THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

All dioceses and agencies should adopt the process of discernment and spiritual conversation as part of their normal governance *modus governandi*.

We need to support our leaders, including by developing modes of shared leadership ("How do we care for our leaders when they get tired? They shouldn't have to feel that they need to always be at the front.")

Leadership teams in parishes, dioceses, social services, could model themselves on what we are doing here: grounding ourselves in the word, listening to the voices we are meant to listen to, giving them a voice at the table, and being led where we are meant to go.

Leaders of key agencies should connect more frequently with leaders within the dioceses — shared leadership, recognising we have a shared mission; come together in prayer like we have these last few days.

Our governance needs to be underpinned by a commitment to self-criticism and continuous review, adjustment and improvement. If we had had that, we never would have ended up in the situation we heard about in the Royal Commission. If we had a deep-seated culture of continuous improvement that was collaborative and listened to lots of different voices, what a powerhouse we would be.

We need to honour and utilise the voices and gifts of the people of God; not just the ordained nor a narrow definition of practising Catholics—this includes listening to and learning from indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, other faiths, and the culture in which we are situated - be in dialogue with the world, not sitting in judgment of it.

We should not see the principles of civil governance as at odds with the Church, we should be in the world, not at odds with it. We need to adopt the principles of transparency, participation,

accountability and listening as these ensure that power is exercised fairly.

We need to have more grace in the world in our theology—less dualistic language in the liturgy. We are a Church *in*, not *of* the world. Review language in the liturgy in light of theology about this.

We need to listen to, learn from and work with other faiths. (Note: In terms of those feeling excluded from the Church, this should include those who are divorced and remarried).

Our group noted the *Light from the Southern Cross* report recommendations on recasting governance (and the various responses to this report).

### ► SMALL GROUP PROPOSALS

Recognise and support — as our mission as Church — a compassionate, sensitive and just engagement with the marginalised in our society or on the peripheries, including refugees and asylum-seekers, the disabled and frail aged, those experiencing poverty, and those suffering from exclusion and disadvantage. This should be present both in welcoming and walking with people within our Church (or who want to be part of our Church), but also ensuring that we support these people in the community through advocacy and support services – by parishes, diocese, eparchies and agencies/ministries.

Ensure that all social services are affordable, accessible and conducted in a manner that respects human dignity.

This needs to be reflected in resourcing (financial etc.) of dioceses and parishes, especially in rural/regional areas – particularly where agencies (which might get government funding) are not present/active or are for some reason unable to provide this support to people (in kind).

Where social services agencies are not present in an area, they should make their (financial and human) resources and expertise available to the parish/diocese in the area so that the Church can effectively minister to those needing support. This could be financed by the agency or by a larger diocese from a metropolitan area; utilise online communication and collaboration where possible.

Promote, celebrate, recognise and advocate for – including through our own offices and social media (i.e. “cross-promotion”/availability of resources, use of Catholic signs and symbols), Church media and our relationships/discussions with government and mainstream media – the good work already being done in this space by our Church, noting that this helps to promote the Catholic nature of our agencies and can serve as an evangelising opportunity.

Ask Church agencies to identify areas of need where government is either not involved or involved only minimally and consider how they might meet that need if they are not doing so already.

That each diocese set up a forum in which all leaders within that diocese (including agencies etc.) regularly meet to discuss their shared mission within their community, and (in some way) ensure diverse voices from the community can be heard to ensure the Church is listening to the world.

That Catholic Social Teaching underpins the work of our agencies and that our agencies state explicitly that they are the outreach of the Catholic Church to the community. The Church welfare agencies are the public face of the Church. Relationship is central to all we do. Organisations should be prayerful, discerning and inclusive at all levels.

Ensure our Catholic agencies are governed by capable, faith-filled leaders focused on the mission of the Church and seeing themselves as part of the work of the mission, working collaboratively with each other and the diocese in which they are situated. Faith formation opportunities need to be offered by the local diocese or by a Catholic tertiary institution in conjunction with similar formation opportunities for those in diocesan governance, and this should include formation on Church mission and Catholic Social Teaching.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### **► PROPOSAL 77**

#### ***FAITH FORMATION IN AGENCIES***

That local Catholic dioceses or universities offer formation for the Catholic health, education and social services agencies, to ensure the mission of the agencies is aligned with that of diocesan structures.

#### **BACKGROUND**

We want our Catholic agencies to be led by those who are well-formed in the faith so that they are not, as Pope Francis says, merely “compassionate NGOs”. We believe faith formation connected to the diocese so that there is unity in mission would assist in achieving this.

# Plenary Council Overall

## PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

### ► PROPOSAL 78

#### ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

That the Members of this Plenary Council recognise that the purpose of this Assembly is pastoral in nature, called to address the pastoral needs of the people of God in four areas:

- Increase in faith
- Organisation of pastoral action
- Regulation of morals
- Observance of common ecclesiastical discipline

Given this, we request the Steering Committee establish a formal review process for all proposals that have emerged throughout this first Assembly and assess each proposal using the following criteria:

How well does the proposal respond to one or more of these four areas?

1. What data supports the proposal?
2. How will we measure the impact the proposal might have to make sure it is working?
3. How will we monitor progress so we can improve further?
4. When might the overall effectiveness and success of a proposal be assessed?

This work is to be undertaken between the first and second Assembly so that when we gather next year firm decisions, consistent with the purpose of a Plenary Council, can be made.

#### BACKGROUND

We need criteria that ensure the Plenary Council remains faithful to its purpose.



**Plenary Council**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

