

Plenary 2020 Information Sheet #4



The Story So Far

In all times, in all places, our Catholic Church is called to “Listen to what the Spirit is saying.” In response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Our Australian Bishops have taken the courageous step of inviting us all into a time of deep listening, dialogue and discernment known as Plenary 2020. People were invited to engage with the question of “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?” As part of **Phase One**, listening and dialogue sessions were held in 2018 and 2019 involving over 17,500 submissions and comprising of over 220,000 people.

There was a total of 17,457 submissions received. Individuals made 12,758 submissions, while a further 4,699 submissions were from groups or organisations. There were more than 209,170 people represented through these 4,699 groups, bringing the total number of participants to over 222,000. At least 35 individual submissions were received from every one of the 28 geographical dioceses in Australia. Parramatta Diocese had a total of 826 identified individual submissions and 212 group submissions, however many people did not indicate their diocese in their submission.

The Final Report for the Plenary Council, Phase One: Listening & Dialogue offers:

- A detailed overview of the Plenary Council process
- The Research Method employed in treating the submissions
- Information about the participants who offered submissions
- 13 Chapters detailing the main findings from the submissions

The report can be found on the National Plenary 2020 website or through this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/Plenary2020final>

On behalf of the Diocese of Parramatta, a big thank you to everyone who promoted and participated in the Plenary 2020 submissions.

National Themes for Discernment

The six National themes for Discernment were released on Pentecost Sunday, inspired by the data from the period of listening and dialogue.

Each theme is framed as a question, namely:

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

- Missionary and Evangelising
- Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal
- Prayerful and Eucharistic
- Humble, Healing and Merciful
- A joyful, hope-filled and Servant Community
- Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform

A Snapshot Report of each National Theme of Discernment can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/themereports>

A four-minute video offers a summary of the story of plenary to date and an overview of the national themes of discernment under the title “Announcing the National Themes for Discernment”. See here:

<https://tinyurl.com/storyofplenary>

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National Discernment and Writing Groups

For each National Theme of Discernment, a writing group is being formed. Each group is responsible for drafting a working paper on their Theme by March 2020, which will help to form the agenda for the first session of the Plenary Council. The role, areas of responsibility and accountability for the Discernment and Writing Groups have been published and applications have now closed. Appointments will be announced shortly. More information is available via the national website.

What do we do now?

We have now entered the **second phase** of Plenary 2020, known as the Listening & Discernment phase. Working with the newly released National Themes for Discernment, there is now an opportunity for focused feedback to assist the development of the agenda for the Plenary Council in 2020.

This is a process of communal discernment rather than individual discernment. The process we are going to engage in is built upon the practice of Spiritual Conversations. It is a process of prayer, contemplation, sharing with one another and seeking God's direction. As the Holy Spirit guides the Church in Australia, all are welcome to participate and discern together. The input from these Discernment Sessions will be sent to the Plenary Council to form the Agenda for the first session of the Plenary Council in October 2020.

Information and Training Sessions for Phase Two

The Pastoral Planning Office is offering Plenary 2020 Information and Training Sessions to assist groups with participating in this second phase of the Plenary process. These sessions will also explain how our Diocese is seeking to "Go out into the Deep", with Bishop Vincent Long inviting us to **develop local and diocesan initiatives** through engaging with the plenary process. Session times can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y27yvutl>

We strongly encourage all to participate in one of the above sessions and to invite others to attend.

Finally

These updates from the Pastoral Planning Office are every two months or so and we try to summarise what is happening in the plenary space, particularly as it pertains to our diocese. We strongly recommend that people subscribe to the plenary website to receive regular and detailed updates. We also strongly recommend that people familiarise themselves with the content of the national website.

Our plenary prayer (<https://tinyurl.com/plenaryprayer>) continues to be a wonderful way we can commune with God as one people as we continue to journey together through this time of plenary.

We are invited to continue to pray and to encourage one another during this time of discernment for our Church in Australia, to speak our truth boldly and listen with a humble heart.

