



**Plenary Council 2020**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...



Solemnity of Our Lady of Help of Christians  
Patroness of Australia  
24th May, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

### **Plenary Council 2020 What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?**

The Plenary Council for the Church in Australia is going to take place over two sessions: The first in 2020 and the second in 2021. A Plenary Council is a forum for Church leaders to consider contemporary issues in the light of the Gospel and to respond in terms of faith, morals, governance, discipline and worship. The participants at a Plenary Council include all the Bishops as well as some priests, religious institute leaders, and lay people. The Bishops have a deliberative vote and others have a consultative vote. A Plenary Council can enact laws which, subject to approval by the Holy See, bind Catholics in a region, in this case Australia.

At Pentecost 2018 the Church in Australia launched the first phase of preparation for the Plenary Council. This first phase is a year of consultations, open dialogue and listening. These consultations are not intended to develop a “shopping list” of changes people want to see made or to overturn the teachings of the Church. Rather they are an opportunity for the broader Church community to reflect on and consider current issues and then to provide feedback to the Council members so they can deliberate on them. Submissions received will assist in developing the agenda for the actual Plenary Council.

Attached is a 4-step process for a Listening and Dialogue Encounter which you may like to utilise when reflecting on the key question “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?” Parishes (and individuals if they wish) are then invited to make their submission to me at [plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au](mailto:plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au) It is important that I hear and have the opportunity to reflect on and respond to the reflections of our local Diocesan Church.

The Plenary Council Facilitation Team would also like to receive your responses. The attached process provides the opportunity for individuals and groups to make your submissions to them to.

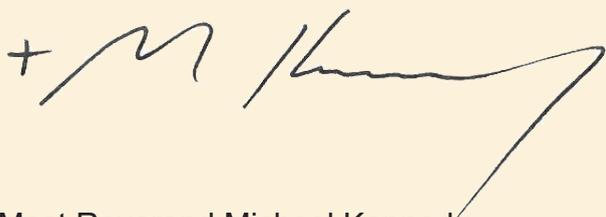
Following are some additional questions I invite you to reflect on which may assist you to answer the greater question of what God is asking of us as a Church at this time in Australia.

## Some Questions To Think About:

1. The family, the parish, and the school have been the three main places of evangelical energy of the Church in Australia. What are the hallmarks of this evangelical energy? Going forward, what are our aspirations for family, parish, and school, and how can we best renew and support them into the future?
2. The Church, as Pope Benedict said, is about a person: Jesus Christ and our relationship with him. How do we keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ to ensure the Church inspires and serves the world rather than become fixated on the world? How do we effectively engage in: praying and worshipping God; passing on the faith; supporting human life and human lives; and living our Catholic moral teaching?
3. Australia has a long and proud history of collaboration between bishops, priests, religious, and laypeople. How do we continue this tradition into the future without taking anything from the uniqueness and beauty of each particular state of life?
4. Often in our two thousand year history the Church has been persecuted or humiliated in numerous ways and has even seemed close to dying. The present-day Church in Australia has certainly been humiliated and some would say even persecuted in some ways. How do we build resilience and hope in the hearts of the faithful and rebuild the Church's credibility in our society? How can each of us be proud and unashamedly Catholic; an active participant in Parish life; and a public witness to Jesus Christ and our faith in Him?

Please take some time to reflect on what God is asking of us. I look forward to receiving your thoughts and ideas.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by a stylized name that appears to be 'Michael Kennedy'.

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy  
Bishop of Armidale

Send submissions to: [plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au](mailto:plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au)  
and also at: <http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/have-your-say/>



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**PRAY  
TOGETHER**

**READ QUESTION  
AND REFLECT**

**SHARE AND  
LISTEN**

**PRAY AND  
RESPOND**

**STEP  
01**

**Pray  
Together**

**You are invited to pray together.**

You might like to read scripture, you can use the words written below or just speak to God from your heart.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Amen.*

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

**STEP  
02****Read Question  
and Reflect****What do you think God is asking  
of us in Australia at this time?**

- Reflect on the question in silence.
  - Write a list of all the responses to this question that come to mind.
  - Share aloud with each other all of the responses you have written down.
  - Working together, choose one topic from your responses to focus on for Step 3.
  
  - Our first topic for our listening and dialogue encounter is:
- 

**STEP  
03****Share  
and Listen**

You can repeat Step 3 for each topic on your list of responses over time. You may want to get together again in future weeks and months in order to continue to talk with one another using these steps.

**REFLECT What have I experienced in this area?**

In silence, reflect on your personal experience of faith, life and the Church **related to the topic area you have chosen** to dialogue about. You may want to write your thoughts down, or simply sit quietly with your thoughts.

**SHARE AND LISTEN Tell a story of my experience in this area.**

Take turns to share aloud with each other your personal experience of faith, life and the Church. When others are speaking, remember to listen with an open and humble heart.

**REFLECT How has another perspective influenced my own?**

After each person has shared, in silence, reflect on how stories shared by other people have influenced your own perspective. You may want to write your thoughts down, or simply sit quietly with your thoughts.

**SHARE How has another perspective influenced my own?**

Show that you have listened deeply and openly to each other. Some phrases you may find helpful are: 'I feel your sharing has helped me to...' or 'From what you have shared with me, I now understand...'

STEP  
04

Pray and  
Respond

**PRAY** At the end of your first dialogue and listening encounter, you are invited to pray together. You can use the words below, or you might like to say a prayer of gratitude in your own words.

Creator God, we thank you for the encounter with one another today.

We know that where two or three are gathered, you are in our midst.

Thank you for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and with passion, and the humility to listen with open hearts.

We ask you to continue to walk with us, as we discover the pathway toward the future you are calling us to.

Amen.

**RESPOND** Your voice is important to shaping the future of the Church.

On the Plenary Council webpage you will find a SUBMISSION link.

This will become your submission to the Plenary Council. From Pentecost (May 20, 2018) you will be able to submit your written response directly to the Plenary Council team online at [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

Have Your Say, SUBMIT ONLINE

**The three questions for your submission are:**

1. What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?
2. What questions do you have about the future of the Church for the Plenary Council to consider in 2020?
3. Do you have a story of your experience of faith, or the Church you would like to share?

**Yes**, I would like the Plenary Council team to contact me about sharing more details of my story. My contact details are:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

MOBILE: \_\_\_\_\_



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Thank you for contributing to the Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue process. Your online submission will help to develop the agenda for the Plenary Council in 2020.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION [f](#) [t](#) [i](#)