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# Plenary Council of Australia 2020

## Response by those at the Listening & Dialogue Encounter

Held Wednesday 13th Feb 2019, St Brigid's Healesville

Submitted 6th March 2019

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*What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*

Consistently the people of this parish have the same answer: "love and prayer".

### **ATTITUDE: Listening and Prayer**

Listen to each other. Especially those "on the outside": those divorced and remarried, those who are angry for being deemed irrelevant or inconvenient, refugees, those angry about the protection of clergy who betrayed us, those who exercise their conscience.

Love each other. Stay with each other and have compassion through the bad times.

Pray. Persist in prayer and in faith.

Deal with clericalism. Share the power appropriately.

Be more open and understanding. Be virtuous when encountering others. See God in all people. Continue to reach out to the wider community with love and confidence.

Balance a love of our precious tradition with words that are from our own hearts.

### **MERCY**

Be merciful, recognise the dignity of others. Listen to my conscience and form it well.

Reach out to the abused.

"Mercy for the victims and villains."

### **FORMATION & INCLUSIVITY**

Laity:

Proper opportunities, roles and formation for the laity, including bible study and Church history. Seek to be active and knowledgeable. The laity will proclaim the Good News in the future.

Women and families:

Better understanding and working with women and married people. Greater representation of women in the Church of the future. Young people to be actively engaged in the life of the Church.

Clergy:

Free priests from administration to focus on sacramental ministry. Visitation should be a priority. Priests should be very well supported, especially those in foreign communities.

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*What questions do you have about the future of the Church in Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?*

We know many former priests in our parish - does anyone ask how many leave the priesthood and why?

How can we consider the importance of youth and their involvement? How can they see the Church and God as relevant to their lives? What is the Church offering?

How can we welcome those divorced and remarried?

How do we discuss conscience and birth control without guilt?

Does the hierarchy of the Church accept that the laity must have a stronger representation at the assemblies of the church that have legislative power?

What function does celibacy have in the contemporary Church?

How do we consider our relevance in the contemporary world?

Would married priests help our need for more priests? We have three "former" priests in our parish, good men with loving families. Wouldn't they help create an environment for children that is safe, and more like the one around Jesus who ministered to children.

*Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?*

The wisdom of our older parishioners has much to teach us.

One parishioner points out how she was given faith: "the faith passed on to me through the faith of parents, community, keeping the commandments, and the various feasts. Catholic education was passed on by nuns who are great believers! Other great role models in the Church help. The Second World War and other tragedies happened yet our Good God was with us, helped us and saw us through."

Another describes her faith: "my faith became much stronger when my husband passed away. This helped me overcome my grief and my prayers became daily. I really feel I belong to my Church and think of it as my home."

Another woman's marriage built her faith: "my husband died a few years ago. He and I had a very happy marriage. Our strong faith and love of God helped us greatly. I thank God for all the blessings we both received on the day of our wedding. We need to love one another as God has loved us."

One man describes how faith was a gift through the Mass: "I lost my faith when I was 21 and came back at 38. Through the parish school's sacramental program my wife became called back to religion and decided to go to Mass again. I resisted, but attended my child's first communion, just to "keep the seat warm." At the first Mass I went to, when the priest held up the Host at consecration, in my mind I saw an electric thunder bolt which struck my heart. I knew that I had to come back to God, and that all Church teaching was Good News. Later I came to understand that Jesus was in the thunderbolt and He has stayed with me since."

Our parishioners recognise what has happened in our own midst and in other parishes: "the victims of abuse and their families have been very poorly treated - there is much to make up in this area. It is a shocking story."