

Plenary Council Submission, Montmorency
Parish Group meeting 26th Feb, 2019 at 7.00pm in Parish house

1. What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?

- God is asking each of us to own our part in an emerging, changing church of today, which we believe is being led by the Holy Spirit. God is asking us to be true and live according to Christ's teachings, to live with Christ at our centre. We need to put our faith into action even to the cross.
- Our Church needs to be relevant and consistent in today's world. We need to interpret the world we live in and act appropriately for the times. This will need genuine repentance (self-awareness), humility and acknowledgement of the call for us to live according to the Gospel of love, inclusive and just.

2. Our Experiences

- One positive experience of how we own our part in an emerging church of relevance and consistency is through our current parish priest, who time and time again translates the message of the Gospel to the modern church in a relevant and practical way. Through his daily interactions and welcome of all people, and through his words and homilies, he informs living the message of the Gospel in our daily lives and how we can enable others to experience love. Recently for example, he spoke at Mass about the Gospel on 'turning the other cheek' (Luke 6:39-45). As our pastor he highlighted how we should treat one another according to the words of Jesus. He then shared that he did not have all the answers, and invited us to think about how we ourselves would translate the Gospel here to our real lives – and think about the difference between forgiving, being true to our God-given nature, versus allowing ourselves to be treated as a doormat.
- Another positive experience was shared by a woman whose husband had come across a homeless man in the park whilst walking their dog. He spoke to the homeless man but had felt awkward and unsure of how to approach him or what to say. When he shared this with his wife she encouraged him and went with him to chat, give him a meal and hot drink. After this experience her husband has more confidence to approach a homeless person and treat them as a 'normal person' to have a chat with, which he often does.
- Another positive experience of putting our faith into action could be seen in one member's experience of delivering Christmas food parcels for SVdP. It has been their experience that what they received back in love, joy and appreciation far outweighed what they gave in material goods.
- A negative experience for one member is the sadness that has come with witnessing close family members moving away from the Church because of the Church's refusal to act appropriately in the context of today's world and all the negative publicity and sadness that comes with this.

- We also reflected on some negative experiences named by different members of our group. It must be acknowledged that there was different levels of support and agreement around some of these issues which include but are not limited to abuse scandals, perspectives on IVF, divorce and gender issues. These issues when not addressed in light of current society serve to make our Church irrelevant and divisive, rather than inclusive and just, which is the core message of Christ and the Gospel.

3. Questions about the future of the church for the Plenary Council to consider

3.1 Plenaries and/or Synods

- Could the Church have more regular plenary gatherings – for example every four years, where all - ordained and non-ordained - can join in?
- Could the Church consider moving towards a more inclusive synodal model, better representing the diversity of its people (clergy, youth, men and women etc.) and hold this every few years to allow more people to discuss important, current issues?
- How will the Plenary Council NOT disappoint?

3.2 Opportunities for Engagement of all peoples

- Would the Church promote more opportunities for non-engaged Catholics (and non-Catholics) to come together for a common purpose involving 'action' (for example social justice, care for the earth)? This gathering would then also involve a very simple nourishment of spirit and sense of care and belonging.
- When will remarried divorcees be freely invited to take part in receiving Eucharist?
- When will homosexual relationships be acknowledged and accepted in the Church?
- Can the Church develop more opportunities to engage young Catholics (and older) who have been through Catholic education but then seem to just be absorbed into the wider community without a sense of belonging? These opportunities would not necessarily be religious-based

3.3 Priests for the Future

- As proclaimed leaders of the Church, will Bishops mobilise to rescind issues within the Church which are contrary to the teachings of the Gospel? For example issues such as the exclusion of women in Church leadership, refugees and asylum seekers being held in detention, and the exclusion of remarried divorcees and the LGBTI community in full participation of Church?
- When will the Church allow women to be ordained priests, for remarried divorcees to receive Eucharist?
- When will the Church allow priests to marry – such as those in the Eastern Catholic Rite?
- When will the Church support women by enacting ordination equality with men?
- When will the position of women in the Church leadership structure be equal to men?
- Could the Church adopt a limited time span for ministries – not unlike those in the armed services – where someone could perform the role of a priest/sister/deacon for 5 years for example, instead of have to remain in this role for the rest of their lives?
- Will the Church support an inclusive, welcoming celebration of Mass which does NOT involve a return to priests having their backs to the congregation and saying Mass in Latin?

3.4 Social Justice

- When will the Catholic Church speak out against the injustice of refugees being held in detention or not allowed asylum and support?
- When will the Church take action against poverty?
- When will the Church more visibly promote its multitude of good works to the wider community at large?
- When will there be more consistent 'badging' or marketing of the Church in hospitals and community centres so that people in the wider community know who we are and what we do for others?

3.5 Governance

- When will the Church Hierarchy be changed and reformed?
- When will the Church establish a framework of governance in our parish communities which better reflects the ethos of Christ?
- When will there be consistency and compatibility between parishes so that our reformed governance and policies are adopted and upheld in all parishes, not just in those whose leadership happens to be more responsible, progressive and resourced
- When will there be consistency globally in the Church so that it truly reflects the universality of Catholicism

General

- Church Bishops: When will you wear purple, pink or red sackcloth and sit on the steps of your Cathedral?