

## What is the process now towards the Plenary Council?

### The Editorial Committee

Many Catholics have been wondering what is happening with the Plenary Council following the stalling and delay due to Covid-19, as there hasn't been much news.

To clarify these future directions, on 5 August 2020 the Sense of the Faithful team met with Peter Gates (pictured), who is a new appointee to the Plenary Council Facilitation Team. We have also closely followed recent statements from the Secretariat.



Peter expressed a strong view that the process of discernment must focus on the Holy Spirit at work in the community, through listening to each other and hearing the *sensus fidelum*. He assured us that the process is proceeding well and that the Facilitation Team is committed to keeping the laity informed of and involved in PC2021.

They support a process of listening to the faithful - and not just the individual, but also at a group level. They are keen to enable communal reflection and to make sure that they don't miss the message from the community.

Currently a Writing Group of four<sup>1</sup> is preparing the *Instrumentum Laboris* or Working Document for the Plenary Council. The document is to be sent to the Vatican to inform the Curia about the focus of the Plenary Council.

To assist people, a Reflection Guide has been added to the Plenary Council website. The time frame has been extended out to mid-2021 due to Covid-19, giving Writing Group and laity more time for input.

The schedule going ahead is:

- The *Instrumentum Laboris* to be finalised by the October 2020
- It will be considered by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference at their plenary meeting in November 2020, after which it will be sent to Rome
- The *Instrumentum Laboris* will be published in February 2021.

As far as we are aware, there will be no opportunity for the faithful to read or input to the document after it is finalised in October 2020, and it will be published in February 2021 as a final document. It is therefore vital that all comments and suggestions be provided to the Plenary Council in the next month or so. This can be done by posting them on this website and/or by sending them direct to [petergates@catholicmission.org.au](mailto:petergates@catholicmission.org.au).

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<sup>1</sup> The members of the writing team are Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, Mr Daniel Ang, Dr Trudy Dantis and Fr Kevin Lenehan. For further details see <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/staff/>

Peter Gates said that the Sense of the Faithful group can value add with analysis of what we see as repetitious themes throughout the six Discernment Papers, and in other ways.

The Sense of the Faithful have prepared four documents covering various Discernment papers produced by the original writing groups. These have been posted to this website, and also sent on to Peter Gates. He will pass them on to the Facilitation Team, the Writing Group and the Plenary Council Commission.

Peter said that part of the role of the Facilitation Team is to try to ensure that the Bishops have an understanding of the importance of the input from the laity and to communicate the sense that for some Catholics “It is now or never.” It is important that the Faithful do not feel lost or damaged by the final process.

The Sense of the Faithful Website is free to all; register by logging into:  
**<https://www.senseofthefaithful.org.au>**