Framework for Motions

MAY 2022

PlenaryCouncil

Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

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Welcome Message

Dear Fellow Members of the Plenary Council,

The long journey of discernment in which we have all been engaged reaches another, and very significant, milestone with the final drafting of this *Framework for Motions*, which will form the backbone of our reflection, discussion and decision when we gather together in Sydney for the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council in a few weeks' time. From the very beginning of this journey, we have been seeking *to listen to what the Spirit is saying,* and this document, which I am privileged to be able to offer you now, is the fruit of both the listening to, and the discerning of, all that we have shared together.

We have undertaken this journey as sisters and brothers in the community of discipleship which we call the Church. We have listened deeply and respectfully to each other, trusting that the Lord will help us recognise the call of God's Spirit emerging from the many voices to which we have been attending. The next stage of this discernment is almost upon us.

When we gather together in Sydney, we will be giving expression to what it is to be the Church. The Second Vatican Council spoke of the Church in many different ways. The very title of one of the Council's most influential documents, *Lumen Gentium*, identifies the Church as the "light of the peoples". Such a designation already provides us with both a mission and a challenge. Two other central ideas about the Church emerge in this document and they, too, shed further light on who we are and who we are called to be. The Church, we are told, is "in Christ, in the nature of a sacrament, a sign and instrument that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people" (*Lumen Gentium* 2). The document then goes on to remind us that we are called and challenged to be this "light" and this "sacrament of unity" together, as the People of God (*Lumen Gentium* 9), who are "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (*Lumen Gentium* 4).

Our time together in Sydney, as we gather for the Second Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of the Church in Australia, will be enormously significant for the whole Catholic community, and for our wider society. As we strive to discern, and then to embrace, all that God is asking of us now and as we move into the future, we will be challenged to recognise both the strengths and weaknesses of 'who we are' and the hope which lies in 'who God is calling us to become'.

To help us throughout this journey, the Facilitation Team and the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council have provided a number of resources to assist us to delve more deeply into what it means to be 'the Church'. Together with this *Framework for Motions* I am pleased to be able to offer you another such resource, this time by Fr Richard Lennan. Fr Lennan offers us a deeply reflective and challenging presentation which seeks to propose a vision for the Church in Australia as a 'graced, missionary and synodal' community of faith.

It is my hope that Fr Lennan's reflections, together with the other resources, which are all available on the Plenary Council website, will help you prepare for the challenge which lies ahead of us. These resources are offered, not in any sense as the last word, but simply as another aid in the task of discernment. I would encourage you to revisit them if you can: https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/read/

In these final days before the Second Assembly begins, let us pray for each other, that we might all have open minds and hearts as we gather together in Sydney to 'listen to what the Spirit is saying' (cf. Rev 2:7 et al). I look forward to being with you all soon.

+Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB

President

Prayer

Creating and Redeeming God,
beneath the Southern Cross and in its light
you have called together a people for Christ
among the many peoples of this land;
you have made us new in the image of Jesus, your beloved Son,
and breathed into us the Spirit of sons and daughters of God.

Look on the face of your Church in Australia today:
see our brokenness and sorrow
for the crimes of abuse and hardness of heart
that have wounded so many individuals and families;
see our hope for the future and longing for your kingdom,
and give us new hearts – hearts of flesh not of stone –
that we might burn with your divine love for the world.

Teach us to read the sign of the times in the light of the Gospel,
with deep listening and patient discernment,
and send your Spirit to lead us into all truth,
that the journey of the Fifth Plenary Council
may strengthen the participation and communion
of all members of the Church in this land,
and raise up a living witness to your presence
among all peoples and through all creation.

Mary, Mother of the Church and Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

Introduction

1. The Catholic Church proclaims Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). We seek to follow his way, commit to and live by his truth, and to allow the Spirit to work within us so that, with Saint Paul, we can say: "I no longer live, for it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). We want to offer everyone the promise and the hope of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

2. Over the years of preparation and consultation for the Fifth Plenary Council, two questions – both theological and pastoral – have guided the prayer, reflection, conversation and discernment at each stage of the process:

    - what is the Spirit saying to the Church?
    - how do we become a more Christ-centred Church?

3. These questions help us to reflect on the themes and priorities that emerged during the national consultation and First Assembly and that now form the basis of the proposals of this framework for motions.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying

4. By deciding in May 2016 to call the Catholic Church in Australia to undertake the journey of the Fifth Plenary Council, the Australian Catholic Bishops were building on several years of prayerful reflection on how the Church in this country could effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the Catholic community in the 21st century.

5. At the turn of the millennium, Pope Saint John Paul II urged the universal Church to a renewed grounding in the person of Jesus Christ and to a new vigour and creativity in missionary witness to the way of Christ. In his 2001 Apostolic Letter, *Novo millennio ineunte* (Entering the New Millennium), the Pope called all the baptised to "contemplate the face of Christ" in all the peoples and circumstances of our time, and to "start afresh from Christ" in living out the Gospel message in each concrete context.

6. In 2012, the Catholic Church in Australia celebrated a Year of Grace. It was a time of renewal and growth in prayer for individuals and communities, and a means of discerning the timeliness of a national gathering of the Church in this country. The warm response to the Year of Grace in dioceses and parishes, schools and agencies around the country indicated the readiness of the Catholic community to face the challenges of renewing the Church's pastoral presence and evangelical mission in Australia.

7. The bishops' decision to call the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia, and to undertake a period of extensive national consultation, expresses the understanding of the Church and its mission articulated in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and in subsequent papal teaching. Pope Francis uses the theological term "synodality" to describe this way of being Church. Synodality calls all the baptised to a shared journey of "listening to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (cf. Rev 2:7 et al.). It requires the ongoing practice of discernment by the community of the baptised, animated and guided by the Holy Spirit, as we walk together on the way (*syn-hodos*) of discipleship of Jesus in the circumstances of our time.

8. The consultation phase of the Plenary Council asked Catholics and others to consider the question: "what do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?" This question emerges from an awareness that the Catholic community in this country is facing a time of both *crisis* and *hope*.

9. The current crisis has several dimensions. There is an urgent need to address the continuing effects of the criminal and sinful abuse of minors by Church personnel and the negligent failures of due care by Church authorities. An effective response to the loss of public trust in Catholic governance and procedures evidenced by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is required. Action is needed concerning the viability and sustainability of dioceses, parishes, religious institutes and ministries due to changing demographics, personnel and resourcing. We need to find ways to develop the charisms of the ordained and of all the baptised in the Church, in existing and new ministries that foster the mission of the Church today.

10. Yet this is also a time of hope in the Church in Australia. We are conscious of a stronger awareness of the presence of the Lord Jesus and his life-giving Spirit in the hearts of believers, in the communal life of the Church, in all human cultures and peoples, and throughout creation. This hope encourages us to work together with other Christians, religions and people who share our Gospel-based values, to strengthen the service, advocacy and prophetic presence of the Church in Australian society. It urges us to build on the good that has been achieved through the commitment of so many clergy, religious and lay people, both employed and volunteers, in parish ministry and mission, education, health and aged care, social services and community development. It motivates us to undertake the necessary work to rebuild confidence in the probity and trustworthiness of the Catholic community in this country. At each of its stages the journey of the Plenary Council has been a way of spiritual conversation and communal discernment. This approach flows from the nature and mission of the Church itself. Grounded in practices of prayer and spiritual attentiveness, Catholic people have shared their experiences of living the faith in an increasingly interconnected yet fragile world. This process of listening, reflecting, speaking and listening again contributes to a rich consideration of pastoral needs and complex circumstances. It informs decisions about practical action that furthers the mission of the local Church. Such practices of communal discernment are an authentic expression of a synodal Church which can be embedded in the canonical and pastoral structures of parishes, dioceses, ministerial PJPs and Catholic agencies.

11. Listening to what the Spirit is saying requires a faith-inspired awareness of the voices, circumstances and contexts that call for a response in Christian discipleship and witness. Vatican II called this "scrutinising the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel".[1]

12. The Plenary Council has recognised the call of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the need for the recognition of First Nations Catholics in the life of the Church as crucial signs of the times for the Church in Australia. Our times are also marked by the transition of Australian society from a predominantly Christian population to a multi-religious, multi-cultural and non-affiliated society, together with the public acceptance of diverse forms of marriage and family life, sexual orientation and gender identification. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and wellbeing, social inequity, workplace practices and international development pose serious questions about the future we wish to build for our country and our world. The Plenary Council embraced the urgent need for the development of an integral ecology of life as a sign of the times that requires what recent popes have called an 'ecological conversion.'

How do we become a more Christ-centred Church?

13. The call and desire to become more Christ-centred as individual Catholics and as communities of faith has been like a touchstone for the Plenary Council journey. We recognise that this time of crisis and hope in the Church in Australia is a call to a spiritual deepening and reorientation. Answering this call will enable us, as baptised people and as Church communities, to reflect more clearly the image of Jesus Christ in the worship, ministries and common life of the community, and in the witness and service that Catholics offer Australian society and the world. The Gospel calls us to profound "conversion, which … leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change",[2] so that we might follow Christ more closely in all areas of life.

14. Many Catholics have noted Pope Francis' observation that we live in not only an era of change, but a change of era. The underlying principles and values, and the shared understandings and commitments, that previously united Australian society are no longer predominant. Social and technological innovations, greater cultural and religious diversity, global communications and travel are all factors contributing to a more complex and pluralist context. The challenge for people of faith is to be aware of both the distinctiveness of their own faith tradition, and of their connectedness to people of other faiths or of non-religious worldviews. The identity and practice of Catholic people and communities is grounded in a personal encounter with God's love made visible in Jesus Christ and poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Far from separating believers in Christ from other faiths and peoples, Christ's love impels us towards relationships of solidarity and service wherever possible in our society.

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[1] Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution On the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), n. 4.

[2] Francis, Encyclical Letter On Care for our Common Home, *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), n. 218.

15. The wide-ranging responses to the Listening and Discernment phase identified several ways in which a Christ-centred Church expresses its identity and mission. A Christ-centred Church is intentionally missionary and evangelising, witnessing to the Gospel message of God's reign on earth in every aspect of life. It is inclusive, participatory and synodal, modelled on the Trinitarian communion of life. It is prayerful and eucharistic, giving voice to all creation's praise of God. Such a Church is humble, merciful and healing, following the Lord who is among us as one who serves. It is joyful, hope-filled and serving, confident in the Light who shines in the darkness. A Christ-centred Church is open to conversion, renewal and reform, since Christ and his Spirit are continually present and at work in the Church and the world, drawing all creation into the transforming love poured out in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord.

16. These features of a Christ-centred Church were explored through the spiritual conversations and deliberations of the First Assembly, as well as through the ongoing reflection and feedback from Plenary Council Members and others. They are expressed in the themes described below which form the basis of proposals for consideration at the Second Assembly in July 2022. The Fifth Plenary Council seeks to foster a Christ-centred Church in Australia by focusing on the following themes through the Implementation phase of the Council:

    1. Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts
    2. Choosing Repentance - Seeking Healing
    3. Called by Christ - Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples
    4. Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men
    5. Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World
    6. Formation and Leadership for Mission and Ministry
    7. At the Service of Communion, Participation and Mission: Governance
    8. Integral Ecology and Conversion for the Sake of Our Common Home

17. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above Introduction.

Part 1. Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts

18. All Australians have much to learn from the cultures, spirituality and knowledge of country of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, our society is yet to recognise fully Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waters now known as Australia, or to achieve right relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

19. The Catholic Church in Australia has been caught up in this history of dispossession, Stolen Generations, the undermining of language and culture, and racism. Dioceses and religious orders have made sincere efforts to share faith, education and pastoral services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, much suffering has been inflicted by the misguided attempts of those who were ignorant of the cultural richness of these peoples.[3]

20. We know that we will not be "fully the Church that Jesus wants" us to be until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made their contribution to the life of the Church and "until that contribution has been joyfully received by others" within the Church.[4]

21. The Plenary Council joyfully receives the following recommendations of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), which were submitted "in the hope that the Catholic Church in Australia will more resemble the Church that Jesus Christ wants her to be in relation to Australia's First Peoples":[5]

    - Developing the cross-cultural competency of clergy, religious and lay workers in the Catholic Church to enable more effective and appropriate ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.[6]
    - NATSICC calls upon the Catholic Church to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to undertake formation training. Further, the Church is encouraged to ensure that existing retreats and courses are culturally appropriate.[7]

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[3] "Continuing the Journey," *Instrumentum Laboris* (Working Document) for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia (January 2021), p. 16 n. 40.

[4] John Paul II, Address to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Blatherskite Park, Alice Springs, 29 Nov 1986.

[5] The following points are drawn from: NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf and includes recent NATSICC editing for nuance.

[6] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 4.

[7] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 4.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality contains symbols and rituals that, when used appropriately in Catholic liturgical contexts, enrich our celebrations and facilitate a welcoming environment for Indigenous Peoples.[8]
- NATSICC recommends that the traditional custodians of the land on which the Church, school, parish or organisation stands be acknowledged in a prominent and appropriate manner. Verbal acknowledgement prior to meetings and Mass is also encouraged.[9]
- NATSICC calls upon the Catholic Church to unearth and discover the genius and gifts that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people possess through inclusion on committees, boards and decision-making bodies.[10]

22. ***THEREFORE,*** *this Plenary Council:*

a. says sorry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in and beyond the Church for the part played by the Church in the harms they have suffered;
b. commits to continuing to work towards recognition and reconciliation;
c. joyfully receives and accepts the recommendations contained in the NATSICC position paper "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church;"[11] and
d. endorses the Uluru Statement from the Heart.[12]

23. **Motion:** That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 1.

[8] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, pp. 6-7.

[9] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 8.

[10] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 9.

[11] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf.

[12] https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/.

24. **Motion:** That each Catholic school, parish, diocese, eparchy or organisation respond to the recommendations contained in the NATSICC position paper "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church" in at least the following ways:

   a. acknowledging in an appropriate manner the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which their buildings stand;[13]

   b. including the online Cultural Competency in a Catholic Context course developed by NATSICC and approved by the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the orientation and/or ongoing formation of staff and volunteers to enable more effective and appropriate ministry; [14]

   c. ensuring that any retreats and other formation activities offered are culturally appropriate;[15]

   d. seeking to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on its committees, boards and decision-making bodies.[16]

25. **Motion:** That the National Liturgical Commission, in partnership with NATSICC, develop options for the liturgically and culturally appropriate use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols and rituals in Catholic liturgical contexts.[17]

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[13] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 8.

[14] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 4.

[15] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 5.

[16] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, p. 9.

[17] NATSICC, "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church," https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/eatsicc.pdf, pp. 6-7.

Part 2. Choosing Repentance – Seeking Healing

26. As the Plenary Council of the Church in Australia, we express our profound sorrow that children and young people and vulnerable adults have been abused by clergy, religious and lay workers of the Catholic Church, and that religious leaders have failed to act sufficiently to prevent abuse. To the survivors of abuse and their families we offer our unreserved apology. We commit to doing whatever we can to promote healing for those so gravely harmed and to make the Church a truly safe place for everyone.

27. We recognise the steps that the Church has taken in recent decades to respond to those who have suffered abuse. These steps have included the national Towards Healing protocol and the Melbourne Response. We also recognise the introduction of policies and procedures to ensure that good practice in professional standards and safeguarding is observed by all who exercise ministry in the Church. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the extent of abuse in the Church and in our society as a whole. The Royal Commission also made recommendations about what should be done to ensure justice and compassion for those who have been abused and to create a safer Church and a safer society. We note the Church's annual reports to the National Office for Child Safety. These provide an account of how Church organisations are implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission. We also note the role of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd, as well as regional and local initiatives, in promoting the protection of children and adults at risk.

28. In responding to the call to become a more Christ-centred Church, the members of the Plenary Council reflected on the special care that Christ showed to children, welcoming them and blessing them (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-15). We are keenly aware of the cases in which the Church has failed to follow Christ's example of such care and we acknowledge the need for repentance.

29. As a Plenary Council, we recommit the Catholic Church in Australia to responding with justice and compassion in all ways possible to those who have been abused, whether they approach the Church directly or through the government's National Redress Scheme or through civil litigation. The Discernment and Writing Group papers prepared for the Plenary Council include useful suggestions for developing sensitive and appropriate processes for the pastoral care of those who have been abused.

30. For the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and for the prevention of abuse, we recommit the Catholic Church in Australia to implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. We endorse the expectation in those standards that each diocese and Catholic entity regularly reviews their procedures for keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe, in the light of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, as well as the requirements of canon and civil law.

31. We affirm the practice of an annual Day of Prayer (currently called "Safeguarding Sunday") on which Church communities throughout Australia remember those who have suffered abuse and dedicate themselves to care for children and all those who are vulnerable, following the example of Christ.

32. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 2; whereby the Plenary Council

a. says sorry to the survivors of abuse and their families;

b. commits the Church to continue to respond with justice and compassion to survivors of abuse and their families;

c. reaffirms the commitment of the Church in Australia to the work of implementing and improving safeguarding standards and practices; and

d. invites all Catholics to commit to ensuring that Church environments are safe and respectful.

33. **Motion**: That, in consultation with those who have been harmed by abuse, consideration be given to a new name for the annual "Safeguarding Sunday", so as to better express the aims of this day, which are currently "to acknowledge the immense damage caused by the sexual abuse of children and adults at risk … makes a commitment to practices and protocols that create and maintain safe environments for all people [and] … invites people to pray for those harmed by abuse directly and indirectly."[18]

During the Second Assembly, discussion of this section will be accompanied by prayer (with some ritual) expressing lament for the suffering caused by abuse and expressing commitment to making the Church a safe place for everyone.

[18] Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, website, https://www.catholic.org.au/safeguarding-sunday.

Part 3. Called by Christ – Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples

34. The God of Jesus Christ is a missionary God, continuously overflowing out of God's-self into the work and beauty of creation. In the Incarnation, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15). "Jesus embodies the depths of God's love 'so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life' (John 3:16)." This proclamation of the kingdom or reign of God is at the heart of Jesus' preaching and action. God's covenant with creation, made new through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, is fashioned, sustained and nourished by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who calls together the community of disciples, the Church, privileged to share in God's mission. The Church exists in and for the world. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, it incarnates Christ's love for the world, just as Christ incarnates God's love for the world. To be Christ-centred missionary disciples requires loving attention to our world, which is marked by both sin and grace, prayerfully reading the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, seeking to grasp the meaning of things and to discern God's will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (*Gaudium et Spes* n. 11).

Shaping Communities Centred on Christ and Sent by the Spirit

35. This call to discipleship is integral to the Gospel. Each of us is called by our Baptism to be a missionary disciple, hearing and responding to God's invitation to follow Jesus Christ with joy.[19] As a people anointed with the oil of gladness, all the baptised share in Christ's three-fold office that is priestly, prophetic and royal (*Lumen Gentium* 31). In this way, the Church proclaims that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:17) and embodies the in-breaking reign of God that transforms human history. In the words of Pope Saint Paul VI, "the Gospel is not out-of-date" but remains an inspiration for offering people of our own time and place renewed hope while also "advancing the life of society."[20] In this way the Church is called to attend with integrity and compassion to the great issues impacting respect for life – "contraception, abortion, reproductive technologies and euthanasia"[21] as well as the inclusion and needs of people with disability, the "frail elderly, refugees, the trafficked and newcomers, those with mental illness"[22] – and to work to protect Australians' right to religious belief and practice.[23]

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[19] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), n. 120.

[20] Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), n. 4.

[21] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 22 n. 62.

[22] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 10 n. 23 iv.

[23] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 12 n. 28.

36. In a spirit of transformation and hope the Plenary Council affirms that we need "to move 'from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry'" (Latin American Bishops in *Evangelii Gaudium* 15). An evangelising community knows that God has taken the initiative; God has loved us first (cf. 1 John 4:19). Therefore, we can move forward, speak and act boldly, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.

37. The *First Assembly Proposals* document encourages "taking the decision to become missionary communities"[24] and suggests pathways for growing as missionary disciples: parish forums;[25] small groups (for example for young people, families, children, married couples, single adults, etc.) that provide a more supportive space for prayer, formation, fellowship and mission animation;[26] and research to identify where missionary activity is thriving.[27] Consistent support has been shown for the pursuit of new models of engagement with young people and families, encouraging initiatives in youth ministry, peer support and evangelisation, as well as support for the domestic Church.[28]

38. The Plenary Council affirms a culture of synodality for parishes and dioceses, where healthy and fruitful relationships between clergy and laity "recognise different but complementary charisms and opportunities for co-responsibility", and desire "consultative and collaborative approaches to governance at all levels in the Church."[29] The emphasis on listening and discernment for a synodal Church reveals how the People of God may be more centred on Christ, build healthy and respectful relationships amongst ourselves, and be effective missionary disciples in the Spirit:

> ... a Church which listens ... realizes that listening is more than simply hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of Truth' (John 14:17) in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (Revelation 2:7).[30]

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[24] *First Assembly Proposals from Small Groups and Individual Members* (December 2021), p. 69, proposal 51.

[25] *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 68.

[26] *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 68-69.

[27] *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 70 proposal 53.

[28] Instrumentum Laboris, p. 17 n. 45; Discernment and Working Groups Proposals for Plenary Council, p. 5 nn. 31-33; First Assembly Proposals, p. 10 proposal 2.

[29] *Instrumentum Laboris*, pp. 19-20 n. 53.

[30] Francis, "Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops" (17 October 2015), quoted in *Instrumentum Laboris*, pp. 11-12 n. 27.

39. The Plenary Council commends the contributions of Church ministries and services to society as examples of evangelisation through missionary discipleship.[31] Amidst many challenges, the Church makes a unique contribution to Australian society through its ministries and services, particularly those in health, aged care, community services and education. The long-standing commitment and service of Catholic religious women and men within these sectors is well-recognised and has been extraordinary. In these domains they continue to provide lay people with opportunities for professional formation and participation in leadership. The unique role of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons demonstrates how both ecclesial governance and service to Australian society may operate in a mature, innovative and effective way. Catholic ministries often already embody synodal elements that form and support missionary disciples. These include commitment to hospitality, encounter and dialogue; strong practices of discernment; Christian service and compassion; and the provision of a variety of opportunities for Catholics to deepen their baptismal calling.

Building Relationships of Respect and Compassion

40. The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. Missionary discipleship is characterised by openness to encounter, hospitality and dialogue: with each other, other Christians, people of faith and no faith, and with the human family for the care of our common home. Just as we were enlivened by "deep listening" during the Plenary Council Assemblies, we propose formation for all Catholics in the practice of listening, so that we might discover in other people a brother or sister to be supported and loved.[32] Mission directs us to the peripheries of society. It calls us to be in active solidarity with all those who experience disadvantage or exclusion, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, people on low incomes, refugees and asylum-seekers, people experiencing mental ill-health and with the exploited earth. Especially important are those who hold a grievance against us (cf. Matthew 5:23), those who experience marginalisation by the Church and those who are victims of abuse, exclusion, intolerance, and lack of compassion and understanding.

> There are deep wounds in our brothers and sisters who are excluded in the Church through a lack of mercy by some… The challenge to meet those in pain is to be a Church that is able to dialogue and listen without judgement, to hear the voice of Christ in their stories.[33]

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[31] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 16 nn. 41-42.

[32] Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship, *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), n. 8.

[33] Thematic Discernment Paper 4, "Humble, Healing & Merciful" (2020), https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-4.pdf, p. 8.

41. Listening has the power to open us to the Spirit's work of transformation, enabling genuine encounter and giving rise to missionary action. During the First Assembly the Council Members devoted their time to thinking of and praying for people who have experienced marginalisation within the Church, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, those divorced, those who identify as LGBTIQA+ and those who have suffered abuse of any form. The Plenary Council expresses our profound sorrow to those who have been hurt through an encounter with the Church.[34]

42. The First Assembly Proposals remind us that a synodal journey needs to be inclusive and focus upon ecclesial participation, communion and mission. As Jesus demonstrates, our language should never be "judgemental, demeaning, and hurtful."[35] Instead:

> Jesus clears a way to seeing two faces, that of the Father and that of our brother. He does not give us two more formulas or two more commands. He gives us two faces, or better yet, one alone: the face of God reflected in so many other faces. For in every one of our brothers and sisters, especially the least, the most vulnerable, the defenceless and those in need, God's very image is found. Indeed, with the scraps of this frail humanity, the Lord will shape his final work of art. For "what endures, what has value in life, what riches do not disappear? Surely these two: the Lord and our neighbour. These two riches do not disappear!"[36]

Seeking Communion

43. In his address to the members of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1987, Pope Saint John Paul II declared: "Just as interreligious dialogue is one element in the mission of the Church, the proclamation of God's saving work in our Lord Jesus Christ is another... There can be no question of choosing one and ignoring or rejecting the other."[37] In this spirit of mission, dioceses and parishes are to commit to building friendly and co-operative relationships with other Christians, communities of other religious traditions and people with no religion, and to promote and engage in the four forms of interreligious dialogue.[38]

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[34] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 15-16 proposals 10-11.

[35] *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 29. Cf. *ibid*. pp. 15, 17, 78, 81, 82, 92.

[36] Francis, "Homily at Mass for the Jubilee of Socially Excluded People" (13 November 2016): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14-15 November 2016, p. 8, quoted in Francis, Apostolic Exhortation On the Call to Holiness in Today's World, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March 2018), n. 61.

[37] John Paul II, Address to the members of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 1987; quoted in Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991), n. 6. Cf. Vatican II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), n. 1; *Evangelii Gaudium,* n. 250.

Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, pp. 52-53 n. 161.

[38] The dialogues of life, action, theological exchange, and religious experience. *Dialogue and Proclamation,* n. 42.

44. ***THEREFORE,*** *this Plenary Council commits the Church in Australia to being centred on Christ, with a baptismal identity and on a path of missionary discipleship. This commitment involves:*

a. Development of resources, formation and advice in the promotion of hospitality, encounter, dialogue and merciful responses to the needs of our society.
b. All Church communities, entities and collaborative bodies developing structures and policies that demonstrate their commitment to collaboration and co-responsibility, in ways that are discerned as being appropriate and achievable.[39]
c. Church communities and entities promoting evangelisation through hospitality, encounter, dialogue and merciful responses in their leadership, formation and education programs.
d. Taking care to provide opportunities for those formed for leadership in the Church, including seminarians, to engage in dialogue with people who experience disadvantage or exclusion, both in the Church and in society.[40]
e. Dioceses supporting Parish Pastoral Councils to establish opportunities to listen to people on the peripheries – within and beyond parishes – and to develop plans to overcome experiences of exclusion, lack of acceptance and other boundaries.[41] *Diocesan Pastoral Councils will explore how to provide Parish leaders with formation and resources for training in these works of evangelisation.*
f. Development of a long-term plan: to evangelise the community and catechise the faithful on the sanctity of life, the nature of the human person, sexuality, marriage and family; for the support of people to live healthy marital and sexual lives; and for proclamation of the Gospel through Catholic engagement in the public arena and contribution to public debate on issues relating to marriage and sexuality.[42]

45. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 3.

[39] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 98 n. 17.

[40] Cf. Discernment and Working Groups Proposals, p. 5 n. 39; *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 54 n. 165.

[41] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 8-9.

[42] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 22 n. 62.

46. **Motion**: That those responsible for Catholic schooling and early childhood education, led by the National Catholic Education Commission and drawing upon the document *A Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education* (2017), establish a national forum,[43] which will seek to:

a. identify and respond to the needs of the diverse and distinct circumstances of Catholic schools in Australia;

b. build partnerships which enhance the vision of Catholic education as an instrument of evangelisation and an essential dimension of the contemporary mission of the Church;

c. offer a process for critical reflection and discernment of the vocation of Catholic education today;

d. support formation opportunities for leadership development and training in religious education.

47. **Motion**: That the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service establish a triennial National Forum of Catholic social service, health and aged care, disability, prison ministry, refugee and asylum-seeker, and justice, ecology and peace organisations; and that the purpose of this forum include:

a. providing opportunities for dialogue that will contribute to the ability of the Church in Australia to attend to "examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel";[44]

b. identifying and exploring priorities for evangelisation through outreach, service provision, advocacy and formation;

c. addressing gaps;

d. seeking opportunities for collaboration; and

e. informing the development of local social teachings to be issued by the Australian Bishops.

[43] Cf. *Towards the Second Assembly: A Working Document for Members* (28 February 2022), p. 18 proposal C3 n. 3. Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 93-94; Instrumentum Laboris, p. 52 n. 160.

[44] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, pp. 33-34 nn. 95-97.

48. **Motion**: That each diocese identify ways of promoting ecumenical and interfaith relationships (e.g., an Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer) that are practical and appropriate for the diocese.

    a. That the Bishops Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-religious Dialogue – in collaboration with Catholic tertiary institutions and theological associations – provide guidance, advice and resources to dioceses for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and relationships, and formation for those responsible for ecumenical and interreligious relations.

Part 4. Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men

49. Saint Mary MacKillop, Servant of God Eileen O'Connor and Servant of God Mary Glowrey are beloved examples of holy women who have made outstanding contributions to the Church in Australia. Their journeys of whole-hearted service to the poor were, at times, met with a lack of support and even outright hostility. The Plenary Council has heard that many women today continue to meet resistance or a lack of support in their efforts to be missionary disciples.

50. The sense of the equality of women and men has grown in western societies over time, with political and civic institutions responding accordingly. Particularly since the 1960s, a growing awareness of the equal dignity of women and men has reshaped Australian social and political life. Nonetheless, inequality between women and men persists and there is still much to be done.

51. The deepest sources of Christian faith speak clearly of equality: "So God created humankind in his image…male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27); and "there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). However, as Pope Saint John Paul II acknowledged in his *Letter to Women*, the Catholic Church has been "conditioned … to a remarkable extent" by a history in which "women's dignity has often been unacknowledged, and their prerogatives misrepresented".[45] He called the Church to work to overcome the cultural assumptions of inequality.

52. On this matter, the Church in Australia has travelled some distance in more recent times. From the earliest days of Catholic presence in this country, religious women have taken the lead in education, social services and healthcare, but women are now also taking leading roles in chanceries and diocesan agencies.[46] Today, though some women are content with their role in the Church, the attention of the Plenary Council has been drawn frequently to the task that remains, especially regarding women's participation in leadership and governance structures.[47] Authentic witness to the equal dignity of all baptised persons requires addressing issues of power imbalance, decision-making, authority and agency.

53. Because the recognition or non-recognition of dignity has a profound impact on people's sense of self and spiritual life, the affirmations and motions below have as their central aim the flourishing of faith within the Church, particularly the faith of young women. The affirmation and motions also seek to order common pastoral action for the good of all.

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[45] John Paul II, *Letter to Women* (29 June 1995), n. 3.

[46] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 16 nn. 41-42; p. 20 nn. 54-55; p. 42 n. 127.

[47] C.f. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 20 n. 55, p. 42 n. 127, p. 54 n. 166; *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 77, 83.

54. ***THEREFORE,*** *this Plenary Council commits the Church in Australia to overcoming the impact of the assumptions that lead to inequality, and to "enhancing the role of women in the Church".*[48] *This will involve:*

a. *ensuring that women are appropriately represented in decision-making structures of Church governance at the parish, diocese or eparchy, and national level, and in Church agencies and organisations;*[49]
b. *ensuring, through formal policies and intentional practice, that the experiences and perspectives of women are heard and considered. This is particularly important for matters which affect them distinctively;*[50]
c. *ensuring that dioceses and eparchies value more publicly, recognise and, where necessary, remunerate more appropriately those women already leading and serving in the Church in various ways;*[51]
d. *women engaged in ministry sharing their experiences and reflections on women's ministry with our bishops, and reporting to Pope Francis' reconstituted Study Commission on the Female Diaconate;*[52] *and*
e. *considering women for ministry as deacon – should Pope Francis authorise such ministry in light of the findings of the reconstituted Study Commission on the Female Diaconate.*[53]

55. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 4.

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[48] *First Assembly Concluding Statement* (9 October 2021), https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/First-Assembly-Concluding-Statement-FINAL.pdf, p. 2.

[49] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 76–77, 79, 83; *Towards the Second Assembly,* p. 12 proposal B3 n. 1.

[50] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 76–77, 79, 83; *Towards the Second Assembly*, p. 12 proposal B3 n. 2.

[51] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 42 n. 124.

[52] At the Amazon Synod, the bishops with a deliberative vote approved paragraph 103 by a vote of 137–30: "In the many consultations carried out in the Amazon, the fundamental role of religious and lay women in the Church of the Amazon and its communities was recognised and emphasised, given the wealth of services they provide. In a large number of these consultations, the permanent diaconate for women was requested. This made it an important theme during the Synod. The *Study Commission on the Diaconate of Women* which Pope Francis created in 2016 has already arrived as a Commission at partial findings regarding the reality of the diaconate of women in the early centuries of the Church and its implications for today. We would therefore like to share our experiences and reflections with the Commission and we await its results." See http://secretariat.synod.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html.
C.f. *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 93; *Towards the Second Assembly*, p. 13 proposal B3 n. 2.

[53] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 62, 77, 83, 93; *Towards the Second Assembly*, p. 12 proposal B3 n. 3; *Institution of a New Study Commission on the Female Diaconate*, 8 April 2020, at https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/04/08/200408b.html.

56. **Motion**: That each Australian diocese and eparchy foster new opportunities for women to participate in ministries that are stable, publicly recognised, appropriately resourced with theological education and commissioned by the bishop. These ministries should engage with the most important aspects of diocesan and parish life and have a real impact on those communities.[54]

[54] Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Querida Amazonia* (2 February 2020), n. 103. C.f. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 10 n. 23 vi, p. 14 n. 34, p. 19 n. 52, p. 20 n. 55, p. 25 n. 67.

Part 5. Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World

57. The Church is "like a sacrament", a sign and instrument of union with God and the unity of the whole human race.[55] "We know that the Church was founded by Christ and that our vocation is to be the sacrament of communion with God and of unity among all people."[56] The Church's receptivity to sacramental grace deepens our spiritual connections with each other, making visible our sacramental nature. The "multicultural nature of our Church community has generated a variety of liturgical and spiritual experiences for Catholics in Australia. New ecclesial movements and communities have also helped many faithful to rediscover the beauty of the Christian vocations."[57] The Council hopes that, drawing on the charisms of religious orders and of ecclesial movements, a rich national network might flourish, providing opportunities for Catholics to be enriched by the spiritual and mystical traditions which have nourished the Church through the centuries.

58. "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12). Members of the Church are diverse, and their vocations are complementary. They are the laity, ordained and religious. Lay Catholics may be single or married; they may participate in ecclesial movements; they may be connected with religious communities. The Church desires to foster vocations in every aspect of Church life, knowing that disciples can serve Christ's mission according to their unique gifts. In recent times, the universal Church has broadened criteria for admission to the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. Together with the ministry of Catechist receiving a greater emphasis, we are witnessing a broadening of the range of vocational calls that the Church in Australia can foster more fully. Throughout its phases, the Plenary Council has also heard a call for the renewal of preaching, which is another acknowledgment of the ways in which Catholics might minister to the People of God.[58]

59. The diversity and unity of the Church are mirrored in "the diverse practices of prayer and the ecclesial/liturgical families of the Catholic communion (the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church)." These "can all help to build up strong communities of faith, to enable the active and effective participation of all the baptised, to create opportunities for ongoing formation in faith and to draw all believers deeper into the mission of the Gospel."[59] Thus, all members of the Church are called to help the Church breathe with both lungs – East and West – especially in the formation of its teachers; in the religious education curricula of Catholic schools, including diocesan, independent, religious institute and ministerial PJP schools; in Catholic universities, and in other institutions of Catholic higher education.

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[55] Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), n. 1.

[56] *Lumen Gentium,* nn. 1, 8, quoted in *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 3 n. 9.

[57] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 18 n. 47, p. 20 n. 54.

[58] *Instrumentum Laboris*, nn. 48, 128, 149; *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 38-41 proposals 19, 20; *Towards the Second Assembly*, pp. 25-26.

[59] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 10 n. 23 iii.

60. The Council affirms the pre-eminent role of liturgical worship in the formation of Christian faith and life, and the consequent need for a renewal of how the faith is communicated, both in the celebration of the Eucharist and in other occasions of common prayer. The way that we worship informs how we believe (*lex orandi, lex credendi).* Our communal worship witnesses to unity and hope in a fractured world increasingly hostile to public acknowledgement of God. The experience of worship, in the celebration of the sacraments and other rites, powerfully forms persons, opening their hearts to ongoing conversion to Christ who is the prime agent in all liturgy. The yearning for such conversion and healing has been evident at each moment of discernment for the Plenary Council.

61. In Australia today, receiving the sacraments is sometimes approached more as a cultural milestone than a moment in ongoing faith formation that unites us with Christ and with each other.[60] It can be more a process of certification than incorporation. Parents who desire for their children to be baptised often have little ongoing involvement in the life of the parish.[61] The first response to these situations must always be to welcome and encourage what is positive in a family's request, warmly inviting them to move further on their journey towards a personal relationship with Christ, lived out in the Christian community. The Church needs to attend to this challenge. It calls for the continued formation of all in a renewed understanding of the centrality of sacramental and parish life. The Church professes the Eucharist to be the source and summit of all sacramental life.[62] Thus, celebration of the Eucharist, and formation for participation in the celebration according to the call for liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council, offers opportunities for spiritual growth. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has requested that the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress take place in Australia. This would provide a time of prayerful preparation for the People of God. The Plenary Council hopes that dioceses will commit to planning and promoting communal public events that focus on the Eucharist, in service of forming Catholic belief, culture and identity. These might include feast day celebrations, Eucharistic processions and adoration, and the development and performance of music well-suited to worship.[63]

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[60] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 13 n. 32.

[61] *Instrumentum Laboris*, pp. 21-22 n. 59.

[62] *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11.

[63] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 36, 44-45.

62. The Liturgy of the Word is crucial to the celebration of the Eucharist. According to the Second Vatican Council, "to achieve the restoration, progress and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites give testimony."[64] Opening up the Word together in prayer, we invite God into our lives. In our listening and discernment, concern has been voiced about the state of preaching in the Church in Australia.[65] Supporting and promoting excellent faithful preaching reflects the importance of the homily in the celebration of the Eucharist: "By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from sacred text during the course of the liturgical year."[66]

63. The Plenary Council recognises the importance of the language used in the liturgy. Translations of prayers and Scripture passages for use in the liturgy need to be both faithful to the original text and sensitive to the requirements of clear and inclusive language.

64. The People of God in Australia have voiced a desire to be formed in the sacrament of reconciliation. Some have advocated for use of the third form of the Rite of Penance, and a desire for more formation in the first and second forms has also been voiced.[67]

65. In a society that sees the Catholic understanding of marriage as "outdated and irrelevant", there is an "urgent and clear need for a renewed catechesis on marriage."[68] At the same time, there is a great pastoral need to care for all married couples, including those who struggle to accept the Church's teachings about the sacrament of matrimony. This sacrament is at the heart of the Church's understanding of the sanctity of human life, from conception until natural death. The Plenary Council affirms the need for an ongoing catechumenate of life, as part of the catechumenate for marriage, supported by local diocesan Offices for Life and Family and the Bishops Commission for Life, Family and Public Engagement.[69] Such catechumenates support those who are most vulnerable in our society. At the same time, they affirm the unique contributions of mothers and fathers to a healthy society. In these ways the Council affirms the union between Christ and the Church, and a call for unity between men and women in a fallen world.

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[64] Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), n. 24.

[65] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 38-41 proposals 19 and 20.

[66] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 52.

[67] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 18 n. 47; *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 45-46 proposal 31, p. 89 proposal 73.

[68] Instrumentum Laboris, p. 22 n. 61.

[69] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 12, 54, 56; *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 22 nn. 61-62; Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation On Love in the Family, *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016), Chapter 6; Francis, "21 January 2017 Address to the Roman Rota"; *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 66; "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World: The Final Report of the Synod of Bishops, 2015", nn. 57-58.

66. ***THEREFORE,*** *this Plenary Council affirms a sacramental and spiritually rich prayer life that is transformed and transforming. To promote people's full and active participation in the Church's liturgy as well as their spiritual nourishment through other forms of prayer, the Plenary Council encourages the provision of liturgical and other prayer resources and opportunities for formation at the national and diocesan levels.*[70]

67. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 5.

68. **Motion**: That dioceses promote widespread exercise of the ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist.[71]

69. **Motion**: That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference establish provisions and guidelines for lay people to participate in a formal ministry of Preaching, as provided for in canon 766 of the Code of Canon Law.

70. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council request an amendment to canon 767 to permit, where appropriate, those entrusted with this ministry of Preaching to preach in the Eucharistic assembly, under the oversight of the local ordinary.[72] While this proposal refers to the liturgy of the Latin Church, the Plenary Council invites members of the Eastern Churches to consider whether similar provisions would be suitable in relation to their liturgies.[73]

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[70] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 36, 71–72; *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 45 n. 140.

[71] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 40, 41, 65. In January 2021, Pope Francis issued the motu proprio, *Spiritus Domini*, which allowed that the lay ministries of Lector and Acolyte, "since they are based on the Sacrament of Baptism, may be entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female." Following on from this, in May 2021, Pope Francis issued another motu proprio, *Antiquum Ministerium*, to formally establish the ministry of Catechist as an "expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith."

[72] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 18 n. 48, p. 43 n. 128; *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 38-41 proposals 19 and 20.

[73] *Sacrosanctum Concilium, n.* 4. The Council desires that all rites be revised "in the light of sound tradition and that they be given new vigour to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times."

71. **Motion**: That the Bishops Commission for Liturgy institute a sustained program of catechesis of the Sacrament of Penance to promote an understanding and appropriate practice of each of the three forms of the Rite of Penance.[74]

72. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council request that the Pope consider whether the Third Form of the Rite of Penance might have wider use on occasions when it is particularly appropriate, granted an understanding among the faithful of its distinctive nature and requirements.[75]

[74] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 45–46, proposal 31; p. 89, proposal 73.

[75] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 18 n. 47; *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 55, proposal 36.

Part 6. Formation and Leadership for Mission and Ministry

73. Pope Francis has observed that "what we are experiencing is *not simply an epoch of changes, but an epochal change* … It entails decisions that rapidly transform our ways of living, of relating to one another, of communicating and thinking, of how different generations relate to one another and how we understand and experience faith and science."[76] This context calls for a re-assessment of the Church's models of formation for leadership at all levels to ensure that they address the needs of the People of God.

74. Throughout the dialogue and discernment of the Plenary Council, many "recognised the need for appropriate formation and support to assist lay people in discerning and using their gifts wisely."[77] The small group responses from the First Assembly identified the need for a variety of formation opportunities for members of the Church from leaders of "Catholic entities to parish family groups, from isolated parishes in the outback to Archdiocesan chanceries" and for people in formal and informal roles.[78] The formation and leadership of clergy" was also identified as "critical to the growth of dioceses and parishes" and to "future efforts at evangelisation in the wider community".[79] The call for "concrete action…to address improvements in governance and leadership… and formation for a wider range of ministries"[80] consistently emerged as an important priority of this Council's deliberations.

75. The contexts, resources and challenges of parish life and ministry vary markedly across this vast land. Therefore, formation as "a deepening of our knowledge of God" and "our discipleship of Christ" needs to be adapted to the local circumstances. Such formation requires creative "multi-dimensional," "integrated and experiential" models and methods, which acknowledge the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Church and support the Catholic identity, vocation and mission of families, faith communities, schools, institutions and agencies.[81] The present moment is complex and requires a fundamental renewal of our missionary energies as well as the scope and style of resources needed to respond to what God is asking of us at this time.

76. Pastoral leadership requires being attentive to the voice of the Spirit within the Church and beyond, and must cultivate commitment, mutuality and synodality within the whole ecclesial community. While encouraging and nurturing the gifts of others, the call to Christian leadership necessarily requires fidelity to the Gospel and a continual growth and renewal of our closeness to Jesus Christ. Through their living witnesses to the great virtues of faith, hope and love, Christian leaders encourage the ecclesial community in

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[76] Francis, "Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia" (21 December 2019).

[77] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 19 n. 52.

[78] *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 52.

[79] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 41 n. 121.

[80] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 10 n. 23 vi.

[81] *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 51-52.

the way of ongoing conversion which, in turn, supports and furthers missionary discipleship. Through appropriate and fruitful ecclesial formation, each of the baptised comes to realise their missionary identity. Each member of the faithful is, indeed, "a mission", called to bring fullness of life, blessing and healing to all people.[82] As all the baptised are called to be missionary disciples, all should be equipped and supported through regular opportunities and programs for ministerial and missionary formation. To give flesh and bones to God's love in contemporary Australia, such formation should incorporate the teaching of the Church about the God-given dignity of life, Catholic Social Teaching and formation in practices of synodality, interculturality, ecumenical dialogue and interfaith relations.

77. Much work has already been undertaken in the area of formation, including the publication by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference of *Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* and *Guidelines for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (2016) and a national resource for Lay Pastoral Ministers (*Faithful Stewards of God's Grace*, 2018). New national guidelines for seminary formation have also been approved by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and are in the final stages of being confirmed by the Holy See. The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards also require the development and implementation of policies for the ongoing formation of clergy, including professional/pastoral supervision, and there are opportunities to extend this into broader requirements for the professional development of lay leaders and ordained ministers. Many diocesan agencies and tertiary institutions offer programs and courses for the formation of lay leaders, and those preparing for or engaged in ordained ministry. Therefore, multiple resources can be drawn upon and integrated into new strategies which respond to the call of this Council.

78. In addressing these concerns for formation, it is important to consider and provide for both the needs of communities in this present time and the needs of the next generation. Formation in faith and new forms of missionary discipleship lie at the heart of this Council's work of planning for the future.

79. ***THEREFORE,*** *to meet the formation needs of the present and future, national formation programs will ensure that:*

a. the diversity of the Catholic community is explicitly recognised;
b. intercultural competency is encouraged, especially in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures;
c. the equal dignity of women and men is affirmed;
d. the concerns, spirituality and modes of communication and connection of young people are taken into account;
e. the rich variety of spiritual and devotional traditions of the Church are appreciated and celebrated; and
f. synodal practices such as encounter, accompaniment, listening and dialogue are fostered and promoted.

[82] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 273.

80. In doing so, each diocese commits to support, develop or re-institute models of formation to encourage and deepen the lay apostolate in the world based on an attentiveness to the "signs of the times", scriptural reflection, prayerful communal discernment and a commitment to engagement with the broader Australian community through listening and dialogue. These models will also support the formation of the domestic Church by encouraging and accompanying parents, guardians and caregivers in their vocation as "the primary and principal" teachers of faith and recognise the crucial role of families as the "school" of Christian formation.[83]

81. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 6.

82. **Motion:** That each diocese establish or strengthen strategic policies that identify and support ministry and leadership formation. These will:

a. acknowledge the generational, cultural and ethnic diversity of the contemporary Church in Australia;

b. recognise the changing community profile of many parish and faith communities;

c. establish broader consultation, dialogue and representation within local Churches' structures and decision-making processes;

d. include strategies for ongoing formation and appropriate forms of mentoring and accompaniment (human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral); and

e. consider avenues for financial support through scholarships, sponsorships and grants.[84]

83. **Motion:** That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference commission the Australian Catholic Biblical Association and the Australian Catholic Theological Association to liaise with appropriate Catholic and diocesan agencies, institutions and educational providers in order to enhance cross-institutional engagement and development of resources and formation programs. The design of these resources and programs will carefully consider the needs of rural and regional areas and creatively assess the use of available technology in order to improve delivery and accessibility.

[83] Vatican II, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis* (28 October 1965), n. 3.

[84] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 54 points 4 and 5.

84. **Motion:** That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference establish a working group with expertise in formation to develop national *Formation for Leadership* strategies and guidelines designed for clergy, religious and lay leaders to address the possibilities and challenges of synodal leadership in parishes and diocesan agencies and support the Church's work of evangelisation.[85] These strategies and guidelines will:

a. have a national scope and be adaptable to local circumstances;

b. aim to enhance competencies in and commitment to synodal practices, with a focus on building communities that are welcoming to all, with particular attention to those on the margins of society and the Church; and

c. identify and promote models of effective engagement with government and civil society.[86]

85. **Motion:** That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference establish a working group with expertise in Catholic Social Teaching to develop a national framework for formation in Catholic Social Teaching in order to encourage, support and expand the offering of programs in Catholic Social Teaching. Situated within the broader teaching and mission of the Church, this framework will emphasise the social dimension of the Church's mission, with a particular focus on the formation requirements of leaders in Catholic social service, health and aged care organisations, Catholic education and dioceses.[87]

[85] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 54, 82, 96–97.

[86] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 35 n. 99, pp. 23-24 n. 66.

[87] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 94; *Towards the Second Assembly*, p. 18 proposal C3 n. 2.

Part 7. At the Service of Communion, Participation, and Mission: Governance

86. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit gives believers, and therefore the whole Church, a special gift for faithfully interpreting and living the Christian Gospel in the diverse circumstances of history and culture – the *sensus fidei*.[88] The Spirit enables ongoing discernment of the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel.[89] All the baptised participate in the three offices of Christ as a priestly, prophetic and royal people.[90]

87. By calling for the practice of synodality, Pope Francis aims to embed more deeply in the life of the Church the central teachings of Vatican II. These include the Council's emphasis on the Holy Spirit's gift of the *sensus fidei* to each, the participation of the entire faithful in the mission of the Church and its call for dialogue within the Church and beyond. Synodality is a constitutive element of the life of the Church, Pope Francis says, quoting Saint John Chrysostom: "Church and Synod are synonymous."[91]

88. The practice of synodality requires the overcoming of "a 'culture of clericalism' that promotes privilege and enables abuse of power."[92] Pope Francis has stressed that "it can prove especially divisive if sacramental power is too closely identified with power in general."[93] Attending carefully to Pope Francis' reminder and the principle of subsidiarity, those whose roles involve responsibility for decision-taking need to ensure that decision-making is not confined to those who exercise sacramental power. Those who will be affected by a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and express their view before the decision is taken, to the extent that this is possible and appropriate. As decision-making authority in the Church is most often exercised by men, there should be careful attention to the voices of women when considering all matters, especially those that impact distinctively on them.[94]

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[88] *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12.

[89] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 11

[90] *Lumen Gentium*, chapter 2.

[91] Francis, "Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops."

[92] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 19 n. 53.

[93] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 104.

[94] Cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2 March 2018), n. 105 and n. 104, which states: "The great challenge for pastoral conversion that follows from this for the life of the Church is to intensify the mutual collaboration of all in evangelising witness… and in any case avoiding the temptation of "an excessive clericalism which keeps them [lay people] away from decision-making." Cf. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* n. 102.

89. As Vatican II and Pope Francis have emphasised, the practice of synodality is integral to the Church's discernment of what the Gospel demands in particular circumstances and to what pastoral action this requires to serve for the good of all.

90. ***THEREFORE,*** *this Plenary Council:*

a. affirms that governance in the Catholic Church should be exercised in a synodal manner, with the appropriate participation of various bodies. For a diocese, this would mainly involve the participation of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Council of Priests, the College of Consultors, the Diocesan Finance Council and, at times, a Diocesan Synod. For a parish, this would mainly involve the participation of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Committee;[95]

b. recognises and affirms the commitment of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference that "within five years following the closing session of the Plenary Council … each Diocese conduct a Diocesan Synod and every ten years thereafter" and encourages dioceses and eparchies to begin planning for this after the conclusion of the Plenary Council;[96]

c. affirms the continuing work of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and the National Centre for Pastoral Research to develop guidelines and provide resources for the establishing and flourishing of Diocesan Pastoral Councils and other appropriate synodal structures;[97]

d. recognises and affirms the many initiatives already undertaken at parish, diocesan and national levels to implement recommendations agreed to in the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference response to 'The Light from the Southern Cross'; and

e. commits the Church in Australia to fostering the discernment and synodal leadership envisaged at Vatican II, called for by Pope Francis and experienced in the Plenary Council's First Assembly through the actions proposed below.

91. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 7.

92. **Motion**: That dioceses and eparchies support parishes to establish and strengthen appropriate synodal structures by developing guidelines and providing resources for the flourishing of Parish Pastoral Councils.[98]

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[95] Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 43 n. 129.

[96] *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia* (2020), p. 20 recommendation 56. Cf. Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to *The Light from the Southern Cross*, p. 27 ("agreed"); see also: *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 82.

[97] The National Centre for Pastoral Research https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/resptogovrev/. Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 69, 73, 84, 97; *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 43 nn. 130-31; *The Light from the Southern Cross*, p. 20 recommendations 50–55.

[98] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 84; *The Light from the Southern Cross*, p. 22 recommendations 74-77.

93. **Motion**: That representatives from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the Association of Ministerial PJPs form a working group to develop and establish a roundtable structure, with the proposed name of the National Catholic Synodal Life Roundtable, to foster and assess the development of synodal leadership across the Church in Australia. The roundtable will bring together representative members of those groups with Diocesan Pastoral Councils and other key national bodies of the Church.[99]

94. **Motion**: That the National Centre for Pastoral Research be commissioned to study the implementation of recommendations from *The Light from the Southern Cross* which has already happened, to identify examples of effective initiatives that have been taken and thus enable further implementation of those recommendations judged helpful and practicable.[100]

[99] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, p. 78, 81, 82, 83. Alongside these references, this motion seeks to articulate the significance for the Church in Australia of the discussion throughout the First Assembly, since it has been a vehicle of dialogue for the diverse perspectives of the faithful. To foster this dialogical and healing process, the motion proposes an ongoing national forum of synodality.

[100] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 76, 78, 82, 93.

Part 8. Integral Ecology and Conversion for the Sake of our Common Home

95. As drought, bushfires, floods and extreme weather become more common in Australia, we realise the urgency of responding to our baptismal calling of taking up God's mission of love for the whole of creation.[101]

96. Throughout the Scriptures we learn of God's love for creation, from the affirmation of the goodness of creation in Genesis (1:2-4) to the Book of Revelation's vision of a creation made new (Rev 21:5). Local and universal Catholic Social Teaching, too, has helped us to reflect on how we might live in right relationship with the Creator, one another, and all of creation.

97. Pope Francis' landmark Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* powerfully pointed out that we do not stand outside creation but are "joined in a splendid universal communion" with other creatures and are called to care for the common home which we share with them.[102] In their Social Justice Statement 2021-22, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, the Australian Bishops also affirm that we need "an integral approach to economic, social and ecological issues" – an integral ecology – if we are to address the interlocking crises of our times.[103]

98. *Laudato Si'* reiterates Pope Saint John Paul II's call to ecological conversion, and encourages the Church especially to undertake ecological education and to foster ecological spirituality.[104] The call to ecological conversion is part of the call to defend human life from conception to natural death, and all forms of life on Earth, because "systems of life and love are deeply interconnected".[105] Responding to this call requires new ways of seeing the world, thinking and behaving.[106] Ecological conversion entails turning from human dominance to belonging to the community of life and to interdependence with all other creatures, awe in the beauty of creation and being nourished by a sense of God's presence.[107]

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[101] *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 23 n. 64.

[102] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 220.

[103] Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, Social Justice Statement 2021-22, p. 12.

[104] John Paul II, *General Audience*, 17 January 2001; Francis, *Laudato Si'*, Chapter 6.

[105] John Paul II, On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), n. 93; *Instrumentum Laboris*, p. 23 n. 64.

[106] John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, World Day of Peace Message 1990, n. 13; Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 14.

[107] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 223.

99. Ecological conversion is both personal and communal, and therefore we must act to care for creation in ways that are both personal and communal. Such action will be informed by Scripture, our theological tradition, Catholic Social Teaching and human knowledge. In responding to these issues, we acknowledge the "unique place of the wisdom of the First Nations peoples, who were caring for country before Abraham set out for the promised land, and who continue to do so today".[108]

100. The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform provides a unique global vehicle for communal action.[109] In *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor,* the Bishops Conference committed itself to joining the Platform and developing a *Laudato Si'* Action Plan.[110] Individuals and families, parishes and dioceses, educational institutions, healthcare and healing organisations, businesses and the economic sector, organisations and groups, along with religious institutes can all participate by developing their own *Laudato Si'* Action Plans or by taking part in an established Action Plan.

101. ***THEREFORE,*** *this Plenary Council:*

a. recognises the sacred duty to care for and protect the Earth as a common home for all God's creatures, including the generations to come; and

b. encourages all Catholic people, families, parishes, dioceses, eparchies, religious institutes, and Catholic organisations to accept Pope Francis' invitation to join the Laudato Si' Action Platform and develop Laudato Si' Action Plans as a vehicle for their ecological conversion.[111]

102. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the above introductory statement of Part 8.

[108] Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 8.

[109] https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/about/.

[110] Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 17.

[111] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 33-34.

103. **Motion:** That, witnessing to their communal ecological conversion, by 2030 each Catholic parish, diocese, eparchy or organisation either develops its own or participates in an established *Laudato Si'* Action Plan which includes the following elements:[112]

a. a public commitment;

b. a governance model, processes and procedures;

c. a mechanism for listening to the ecological wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;

d. regular reporting on progress towards and accountability for defined goals and objectives; and

e. co-construction of those goals and objectives with the people they are meant to support and serve.

[112] Cf. *First Assembly Proposals*, pp. 33-34.

Motion for the Implementation Phase of the Fifth Plenary Council

104. **Motion**: That the Plenary Council adopt the following steps for ensuring the effectiveness and accountability of the Implementation phase, to take place after a period of five years:

a. the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council will be responsible for establishing terms of review for the Plenary Council's implementation;

b. a roundtable body such as that proposed in the motion at paragraph 93 will be responsible for co-ordinating the review;

c. interim reports will be published in 2023 and 2025; and

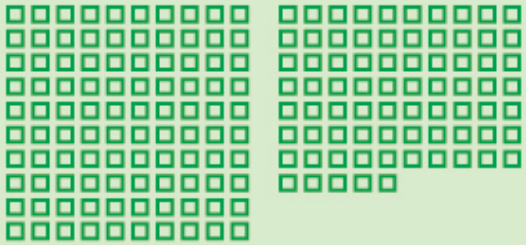
d. the final review report will be published five years after the Second Assembly, in 2027.

Motion to Resolve the Decrees of the 1937 Plenary Council

105. Text to be added later

Outline of the Structure of the Catholic Church in Australia

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES



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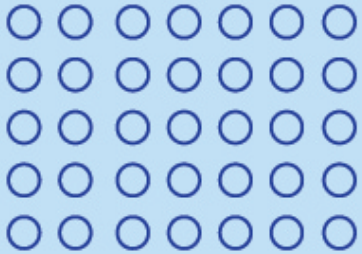
Often colloquially known as "religious orders", these groups are known as Institutes of Consecrated Life or Societies of Apostolic Life. Their members live in community and adhere to a way of life under vows. They are governed according to their own constitutions – usually approved by the Pope, but in some cases by the local bishop. They work in a diocese with the consent of their local bishop.

DIOCESES, EPARCHIES & ORDINARIATES



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There are 28 geographical Dioceses – seven of which are designated as Archdioceses. There are also five Eastern-Rite Eparchies and two Ordinariates, each of which covers all of Australia, and beyond in some cases. A Bishop, Eparch or Ordinary is the head of each entity, directly accountable to the Pope. The Bishops all meet twice each year, work together on 11 episcopal commissions and are supported by a range of advisory councils.

PUBLIC JURIDIC PERSONS

12

Some Religious Institutes have transferred their ministries (e.g. schools, hospitals, aged care) to public juridic persons (PJPs) – an entity established in canon law with a specific function. As these new entities have an exclusive responsibility for Church ministries, they are often known as 'ministerial' public juridic persons to distinguish them from traditional PJPs, e.g. parishes, dioceses, religious institutes.

Bodies Supporting National Collaboration

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

ASSOCIATION OF MINISTERIAL PJPs

SCHOOL, PARISHES, HOSPITALS, AGED CARE SERVICES, OUTREACH, MISSION

ASSOCIATIONS OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL & OTHER LAY ORGANISATIONS
(e.g. St Vincent de Paul, Legion of Mary, Knights of the Southern Cross, Catholic Women's League)

PlenaryCouncil

Listen to what the Spirit is saying...