

OUR LADY of the PINES PARISH, DONVALE, MELBOURNE

PLENARY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

This Plenary Council Submission is based on five Listening and Dialogue Sessions held at Our Lady of the Pines Parish, Donvale, Melbourne on Monday 12 November 2018 at 9.15 am and 7.30 pm, Tuesday 13 November 2018 at 9.15 am and 7.30 pm and Sunday 17 February 2019 at 10.30 am.

All members of the parish and school community were invited to participate in the Listening and Dialogue Sessions. The community was also asked to encourage their family and friends, particularly those who no longer attend Mass on a regular basis, to participate in a Listening and Dialogue Session, emphasising they would be most welcome at our parish or attend in their local parish. The responses covered a broad spectrum. There were those who said they would not come to a Listening and Dialogue Sessions because they had nothing to contribute. But they were still encourage to attend and have a chat with friends as everyone's point of view was important and valid. In discussions it became evident that these people had been told by the clergy for 60 or more years that their views were not welcome nor relevant; they simply had to obey. What became known over the decades as the expected form of lay participation in the Church as 'pay, pray and obey'. There were those who saw a complete failure in leadership and governance by the bishops and said – "What is the point, nothing significant will change." At the other end of the spectrum there was the vast majority of the community who are keen to see OUR Church regain its position of trust and relevance in our spiritual lives and in the broader society. A sacred place with a strong focus on justice and respect for all. The majority of this group considered that significant change was necessary before trust and relevance could be re-established. The Church needs to move from an obsession with sin and rules which has made the institutional church a cruel unwelcoming place, to a place of love. Jesus said – "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"; and in the early Church, a pagan observation of Christians was - "See how they love one another." Members of our community considered that we are blessed to be part of such a loving, supportive community. However, such Christian love was not evident in the institutional church.

The majority of the participants in the Listening and Dialogue Sessions held at Our Lady of the Pines are active Catholics, who attend Mass every Sunday, who are active members of a vibrant Catholic community and many are actively involved in Catholic social services agencies.

Consideration was given to preparing an executive summary or collating common themes to reduce the level of duplication in the submission. However, it is valuable for the Plenary Council Facilitation Team to see the common themes that have emerged from the various Listening and Dialogue Sessions.

The sessions began with a quiet reflection. The participants were advised that their personal thoughts were critical and each person's views are valid, even if they differ from the other participants. The sessions were seen as an opportunity to share ideas and experiences. For some people, this brought up some painful experiences, which were treated with care, respect and Christ-like love. For such people the Listening and Dialogue Sessions were an important part of their healing process, following years of hurt caused to them by their church. The discussions traversed the experiences of all the participants, including their hopes and aspirations for our church and what is typical of the broader Catholic communities around Australia. It was recognised that our parish is blessed to have a Christ-like parish priest and community.

The process for the Listening and Dialogue Sessions focused on the key questions that the bishops of Australia have asked us to address. There was some level of overlap between the responses to the first and the second question posed by the bishops.

WHAT DO YOU THINK GOD IS ASKING OF US IN AUSTRALIA AT THIS TIME?

The first question was seen as a little abstract by some of the participants and - *What do we want our church to look like in 2025? or What would Jesus want His church to look like in 2025?* – were discussed. None of the participants sought change in the Church because it would be convenient to them, but recognised the presence of the Holy Spirit in the process.

The responses by the participants to the first question of - *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* - were as follows:

To bring about a more Christ-like Church.

To establish trust and relevance in God's Church.

To bring about substantial change in the Church in order that the institutional church ceases to be a blocker between the people and God, and becomes a bridge to carry the people to God.

To establish credibility in order that God's Church is an effective advocate for social justice in Australia.

To be a more encompassing church. To get back to how Jesus was on earth and welcome everyone. Don't be so judgemental. Too many man made laws. Be more welcoming. If people want to become Catholic, don't put laws in the way – Jesus would have wanted them to be baptised.

To be more inclusive. What would Jesus do?

To be more tolerant, open and welcoming.

'What would Jesus do?' He would reach out to those who are often made 'outcasts' by the many rules we now have.

We live in a time characterised by declining trust in society's major institutions – governments, banks, and our Church. God, through society generally – all His people - appears to be calling on the leadership of such institutions to accept responsibility for their many failures; to take corrective action; and to ensure such failures never occur again. Although some such action has been taken in our Church, much more needs to be done. God is calling us back to be a Christian Church, not an institution which has lost sight of the core teachings of Jesus.

We also live in a time characterised by a growing divide between the rich and the poor. Our Church responds to this through the many Catholic social service agencies which have become seen as the 'real church'.

We are blessed to have a Christ-like parish priest. But as we move from the parish level up the hierarchy, the Church changes from 'the home of Christian values' to an institution indistinguishable from other failed institutions.

To be authentically representative of the truth of the teachings of Jesus. That will genuinely show His encompassing love for all people of the world without exception.

To be loving. Respectful of differences. To be tolerant. To be accepting and forgiving. To be more Christ-like. Less focused on man-made rules. Less ostentation eg dress of the bishops and the hierarchy. To be open and appealing to our youth – open to all in fact. To be less staid and

conservative. To be joyful and provide services. Welcoming. Rejuvenation and rebirth. To be open to the Holy Spirit. To promote our Catholic bodies like Caritas and Vinnies.

Less institutional. Less emphasis on rules and regulations, and on punishment for not following them. Welcoming. Inclusive. Non-judgemental. Put others first. More concerned about how we treat each other than following rules. Uplifting liturgies – language we can all relate to. Not lose our traditions but move with the times. How do we attract people back? People feel disconnected. More lay people helpers - priests don't have time to visit their community. Greater role for women in leading.

That we recognise that the Catholic Church, the institution and the faith, is dying as an institution – by most criteria is irrelevant to society. That God's church model the teachings of Jesus, that the Church truly reflect the Faith. That the people of the church accept responsibility for the mission of the Church. That all Catholics model the teachings of Jesus in responding to the challenges of society. That lay people insist on a Christ-like church and demand accountability from church leaders. That women be treated equally in the Church. That bishops listen to all the people of God. That the Church provide Christ inspired leadership on social issues. That the bishops of the Church listen carefully to what Jesus said to the Pharisees.

More participation and attendance in Church mass and events.

More relevance to current times, be more progressive.

Get the younger generations to participate.

More bible study of the old and new testament to get a better understanding of the bible and God / Jesus' teachings.

Acceptance of all – eg divorcees, people in same-sex relationships – a non-judgmental church.

Make mass more welcoming – less pompous and ceremonial.

To make the church more palatable for young people.

Cancel individual Confessions.

Excommunicate priests, bishops etc who have been convicted of paedophilia.

Married priests.

Female priests.

To be relevant to our community (all people).

To engage deeper with young people under 30 and young families – ie Priests to become missionaries in their community / parish.

Less emphasis on sin and more forgiveness – ie Divorce.

Less Ritual. Less Rules.

Women priests.

Celibacy out – not compulsory. Reduction in Clericalism.

Reintroduce Reconciliation of the 3rd Rite.

Greater role for women – ie Deacons.

Remove the Bishops' mitre.

Weddings outside church buildings.

Women ordained to the priesthood – Having been involved in the ecumenical movement, I believe it works very well in other churches.

The church needs to be more inclusive of all people. Judgements should not be made on people.

The Church has got to become more relevant.

Priests should be allowed to marry.

Confession should not be compulsory.

Parish priests should have contact with children at school – regularly – If only addressing a school assembly and having fun and positive time there.

Parishioners to be taught from the Bible and to openly discuss.

A place of acceptance and trust.

Reaching out to all, and not judging.

A Church that openly practices what it preaches, and provides help and refuge.

Increasing role for women – Not only cleaning, flowers, office work ext, but teaching, ministerial roles, on committees, and right throughout the church.

Developing paid roles / positions for either males or females, to support priests in a ministry role (eg Uniting Church).

Acceptance of LGBTI – These are all normal human beings whose needs are the same as ours. They require understanding and acceptance. We need to change our attitudes to stop the needless persecution of these people. We need to halt discrimination in our workplaces, schools and churches. We need to develop an acceptance of diversity. We need to provide acceptance for both students and teachers, and reduce the burden they carry. Provide councillors where needed.

That the church continues to be relevant to all ages.

That it embraces all people with love, understanding and compassion.

That it is inclusive so that no groups feel unwelcome despite belonging to a minority group within society.

That the sacraments that have always been an integral part of the church have all remained and are regularly observed.

That the rigidity of some of the rules have been studied and in some cases changed to address in a sympathetic way the needs of its members.

That despite the challenges presented by the non-believers our faith in God remains steadfast.

God is asking us to be more like Jesus: humble, accepting of all, loving, observant, forgiving, welcoming, warm, comforting, non-judgemental, empathetic, not feeling superior to anyone else. He wants us to love Him and to show this by loving one another.

Inclusiveness is fundamental to Christianity, not just a traditional guideline.

Learning from other faiths in process and life values.

Identifying what is important in our faith journey.

Reflecting 'social standards' with Catholic Church guidelines / practices / rules.

Recognition of women.

Accountability of Church hierarchy.

Lay input and recognition.

Church hierarchy to listen to the lay people of the Church.

Moral judgements must be contemporary but in line with Christian values.

Christian Values – back to basics.

Review of traditions / decisions / Church law / doctrine formed by men over the centuries – Are they in line with the message of Jesus?

God is asking us to be humble, generous and loving.

God would want a church which values each person who wants to join.

God would want everyone to be fully appreciated for who they are.

God would have a church where each person's gifts are identified, nurtured and nourished into ministries to serve the mission the Church has been given.

Jesus wants a church which is free of barriers, encourages and welcomes all.

God would have a church where lay leadership is encouraged and promoted for all members of the laity.

God would want us to protect the most vulnerable in our society - the poor, the homeless, the lonely, refugees, those suffering mental health issues ++. We are the largest humanitarian organisation in the world. Many Catholics see Catholic Social Services as 'the true church' today. If a commercial agency says – 'We cannot take They are too great a risk' or a government agency says – 'We do not have the facilities to take Many Catholic agencies, inspired by the teachings of Jesus, would say – '..... must have been meant for us.' But many people do not trust our motives. We do this because Jesus showed human kind a new way to live. A way that looks after all in the society. We can measure how civilised a society is by looking at how that society treats its most vulnerable. But many people believe we do this for evangelisation (a terrible word) reasons, and we do this for power, control and for money. We need a paradigm shift in how we communicate, how we deal with people, how and why we act to reflect the love of Jesus to all humanity.

The church should not be driven by man-made rules.

There is a lack of understanding by the people concerning the rules.

There is a lack of understanding of the people by priests and bishops.

Mass should be a connection between the people and God, and between the people.

"See how these Christians love one another." We see this in our parish, but not in the broader church.

What is a Catholic? Is it all the baptised or just those who attend Mass each week?

Missing Mass on a Sunday is a mortal sin. Will the bishops lift this pressure on families? Is it ok for people to try but ok if they do not make it every week.

Why to parents send their children to Catholic schools if they are not going to go to Mass?

There was a greater level of commitment to the Church by school parents in our day.

Should Catholic schools issue strict guidelines re Mass attendance?

Catholic schools should at least push the message to attend Mass.

People put their children's sport as a higher priority than taking them to Mass on a Sunday.

But what came first – the chicken or the egg? Junior sport only became popular on Sunday mornings when a large proportion of the population stopped coming to church because of the loss of Christian values by the clergy.

Values are more important than dogma.

Most Catholic school parents accept the values but reject the practise.

We should not judge people for missing Mass.

Both parents are working today and this is having a significant impact on families.

Evangelising is failing as it does not reach out to all people.

Religious teachings in the schools should be based on the Gospels.

School children should be required to present at school something that they learnt at Mass.

The school bulletin should include – 'We would love you to come to Mass'.

Many of our churches are run by Pharisees. They are too rules based and there is too much clericalism. Priests are not God. That is why parents are not bringing their children to Mass.

The Children's Liturgy on Sunday at Our Lady of the Pines is wonderful. If the children could tell their friends at school how good it is, more would come.

Many parishes engage the school in RCIA where the question is asked of prospective parents about their faith journey.

Our priest puts a lot of effort into his homily. But most priests are not good at giving homilies.

Homilies should be about spiritual guidance, not doctrinal instruction.

When will the bishops reintroduce homily training into the seminaries, like that which was once provided by Bob Santamaria – a lay person.

Homilies should be relevant to life today.

Women must be ordained. We have passed the day when women were regarded as 'not clean'. The men denied Jesus and most of the men deserted Jesus at the time of his great suffering and death.

Jesus allowed a woman to be the first person to know of His resurrection and she told the Good News to the men.

Will the bishops allow special days to celebrate LGBTI people?

Unlikely, they won't even let us have a proper celebration of the life of our deceased.

We should have a prayer at Mass for the success of the Plenary Council.

There is a lack of understanding of the scriptures by the laity.

It is up to us [the laity] to educate ourselves in a Christ-guided manner.

I do not come to Mass because there is a rule.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA THAT YOU WOULD LIKE THE PLENARY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER?

Moving then to the second question posed by the bishops – *What questions do you have about the future of the church in Australia that you would like the plenary council to consider?* It was clear from the vast majority of the participants that considerable change is necessary in our Church to take us from where we are today to what God is asking of us in Australia at this time.

The practical steps to implement the necessary changes were seen as follows:

Women must be empowered in the Church.

The laity generally must be included in decision-making.

New structures advising the bishops.

Bishops reporting on goals – successes and failures.

The selection of bishops must be informed by the laity.

Parish priests must reject autocratic approaches.

Pastoral Councils at dioceses and parish levels.

Transparency in church affairs.

Strategic plans for all levels of Church administration.

Return of the Third Rite of Reconciliation.

Community reflections.

The governance standards and practices in our Church are well below the basic minimum that is expected of any Australian corporate entity. Lay people should be listened to, not treated as being disloyal.

Some bishops are unfairly tainted by the poor pastoral care, governance and leaderships of their predecessors. But current bishops should respond to all letters and emails from the laity. The laity have a great deal to offer the church. These Listening and Dialogue Sessions are great, but generally the bishops just shut down the laity. Thank God for good parish priests.

We need to be more evangelical. Look at what the Pentecostal churches do – they have large numbers.

I am not sure how, but we need to get the young ones staying with the church and attending Mass.

We should be asking the young generation the question of why they have drifted away and what we can do to get them to participate again – not just teenagers, but people in their 30s and 40s.

Perhaps we need to 'market' ourselves better – for instance the Salvation Army is always in the paper when there are disasters. Catholic agencies do a great job too but they are not talked about eg Caritas v Red Cross.

Encourage more married deacons – preferably married priests.

Include women in the hierarchy of the church so they can participate in decision making.

More lay participation may help as we have so many foreign born priests now and they may not relate to the young people being from a different culture. Not quite sure what the 'lay look' should be at this stage but they need to be encouraged to help build up the numbers coming to Mass and participate in the sacraments.

Jesus wasn't on a pedestal – the priests need to be more of the people – take away the administrative tasks from priests and the financial responsibilities – they should only be doing pastoral work.

Find a way to bring more people to weekend mass because, unless they study God's word at home, this is the only way to know Jesus' message – the Good News.

Women in the church have a great deal to offer and I would like to see them more prominent, not necessarily ordained.

Why can't we have married priests?

Reach out to young people with a positive message about the teachings of Jesus.

The hierarchy (princes) of the church have to be more in touch with the people, both mature and young.

Married priests would have a more realistic idea of everyday life and its difficulties, as would women priests.

I have great hopes in the leadership of Pope Francis. He is a humble man who does seem to be 'more like Jesus'.

By removing from the hierarchy of the church all that is not of Jesus teachings, including all resistance to reaching out to all people who are struggling with conventional Catholic teachings and canon law, focusing strictly on pastoral care.

Abolish compulsory celibacy.

Combine all Christian churches.

Married priests.

Female bishops and priests.

Less hierarchical decisions and instructions.

Eliminate many man-made rules.

Go back to basics – Love your God and Love your Neighbour.

Appeal to our youth – less boring services.

Promote our wonderful good works.

Listen to the lay people.

Open the church up – transparency.

Change the way we choose our Pope and our cardinals.

Better public relations – promote our social justice activities more.

Better use of women – women priests.

Married priests will connect better with their community.

Embrace all – eg divorcees and gay people.

More about the people than the rules.

Review the current rules of the church and discard old ones that are no longer relevant.

Adopt new rules of the church to make the church more relevant to current times.
Get more lay men and women involved in the organisation and the Mass.
Bible studies and teach the relevance to current times. Start from younger age and through to adult years.

The rigidity of quite a few rules need to be reviewed and in simple terms made more embracing of the needs of the people.
Members of the church should not feel that they are continually being judged for any reason – eg their attendance at Mass, their relationships, their sexuality, criminal history etc.
Whatever their situation they are welcome and the more they reach out the more they will find comfort and healing.

Rather than being blinded by too many rules and expectations, we need to open our eyes and ears to be aware of those around us and be sensitive to their needs.
We need to care for ourselves and for others. In doing this we are sensing God.
The church may need to relax some of their rules so people who are not following all those rules can participate in the Catholic faith without feeling like a hypocrite (ie feeling guilty).
Education via families and schools that God will embrace everyone who reaches out to Him.

Adult faith education as a means of renewal of our faith needs to be on the agenda for the Plenary Council. Archdiocese of Los Angeles in the United States made good progress with this challenge some years ago.

Why do bishops think the media is to blame for the current state of the church? If there had not been numerous failures by priests and bishops, the media would have nothing to write about.

Are changes really likely to occur after this Plenary Council?
Are women going to have a greater role in our church?
Will changes be made in regards to divorce, contraception, gender inclusiveness, sexual orientation?
How can we include all?

The Church needs to be somewhere that people can turn to in times of stress, without judgement.
There have been double standards where evil actions of some in our hierarchy have been swept under the carpet, whilst many people who are just living their lives are made to feel alienated because of divorce, contraception or sexual orientation.
We must reach out to as many communities as possible.
We must take on the mantle of care as the number of clergy declines.
Should those who attend our Mass who are Christians be allowed to receive Communion?

Introduce a Parish Charter (the current guidelines from the Archdiocese for Parish Pastoral Councils are very basic). A de-emphasis on Clericalism and ordained priesthood who focus on preaching, teaching and sacraments and shift parish administration to the laity - Are changes to Canon Law required?

Will the Church remove the concept of ontological? Change canon law which generally says that at the time a priest is ordained he is elevated to a higher level of closeness to God which intentionally separates him in authority and spirituality from the people he is ordained to serve.

Will the Church become tougher on only allow children into Catholic schools who have an involvement with the church / parish.

We should not throw out the rules, but study how and why the rules were developed. But the application of the rules has been cruel and harmful, lacking Christ's love.

Why does every parish in Australia not have an active RCIA program?

When will the Theology of RCIA become a required unit of study for seminarians?

It is time the Church hierarchy began to listen intently to the people of God.

Priests and the hierarchy need to realise that they are the servants of God, and that priests, bishops, cardinals and the pope are no more sacred than any other baptised Christian.

Clericalism was judged by the Australian Royal Commission to be a major factor contributing to child sex abuse by priests.

Priests, bishops and cardinals believe themselves to be superior to the laity and the lay people looked up to them with the same opinion. This gave them an enormous power base. The Church has thrived on this for centuries.

Priests in the seminaries need to be taught to be partners in the mission, not dictators.

Women should be seen as equals with rights to Church leadership, servant ministry and presiders at the Eucharist – in other words, women priests. It is time for the patriarchal superiority to be abandoned.

Married priests should be permitted to servant ministry and presiders at the Eucharist. Anglican priests who join the Catholic faith are allowed this privilege, so what is the difference.

Rules and regulations made up by man need to be revisited and those that exclude lay people, women, divorced people, LGBT people, people of other faiths, those in irregular relationships etc. need to be abolished.

The Church must cleanse itself of the ongoing evil of systemic sexual abuse. This abuse starts often in the seminaries and then has been supported and protected by most of the church's structures and leadership. So, every Bishop, Archbishop or Cardinal who has covered up abuse, moved abusive priests around or not reported abuse MUST be stood down from their role and never be promoted again into any leadership positions; and every single paedophile priest MUST be defrocked within a year.

There must be an immediate end to the mandatory celibate priesthood with the aim of married priests as the norm.

Ordination of women priests must start straight away.

A total new focus on young people.

A complete rewrite of the Mass to remove all dated, exclusive terminology and to bring it into the modern world.

A much more loving and kinder approach to ensuring inclusion of those currently excluded or feeling excluded: divorced, gay etc.

A number of young priests coming out of the seminary today have extremely conservative views. Young priests will need to change some of their views rapidly if the Church is to recover. Many of the men studying for the priesthood understand that the ontological change that occurs at ordination elevates them to a higher level of closeness with God which intentionally separates them in authority and spirituality from the people they are ordained to serve. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the ontological change that occurs at ordination. Holy Orders places one in another position in the community, not a better or more privileged place, but a place from which one is called to spend one's life in service of the people of God.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE A STORY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF FAITH OR OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA THAT HAS SHAPED YOU?

The third question posed by the bishops was - *Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?* It was not possible in the Listening and Dialogue Sessions to capture all the personal stories the bishops have invited us to submit. But what is really important, is for the bishops to understand WHY Catholics feel the way they do. What have been the experiences in the lives of Catholic that have brought them to suggest the changes above?

Accordingly, all participants were asked to go on-line and submit their personal stories to the Plenary Council via the website. Participants were also asked to encourage their family and friends, particularly those who no longer attend Mass on a regular basis, to submit their personal stories.

But an interesting reflection at one of our Listening and Dialogue Sessions was – “Catholics do not tell / share good news stories – personal stories – miracles in their lives. Other Christians share their stories, but we have been taught to ‘listen and say nothing’.”

One of the most moving personal stories to come out in one of our Listening and Dialogue Sessions came from a lady who was divorced in 1994. She did not initiate the divorce, did not want the divorce and could not prevent the divorce. In 1975 Australian legislation introduced a ‘no fault’ policy regarding divorce. This meant the only requirement for divorce is the ‘irretrievable breakdown’ of the marriage which is proven by the husband and wife being separated for twelve months. The partner does not have to agree to the separation. Because of the Church’s teachings on marriage and divorce, she felt like an outsider and could not receive the Eucharist for many years. Under canon law, she should not have been banned from the Eucharist unless she took a partner or remarried in a civil ceremony – which she had and has not done. This illustrates the inconsistency in the application of canon law around the world and the stigma placed on divorced people – a cruel act on a good, innocent Catholic person.

SURVEY RESPONSES

The community was also asked to encourage their family and friends, particularly those who no longer attend Mass on a regular basis, to participate by attending a Listening and Dialogue Session or making a personal submission on line. However, over time, a number of people said that their family and friends found the first question difficult – *“How can we know what is in the mind of God?”*

This brought about some interesting discussions delving more deeply into the spiritual lives of individuals. Most Australian Catholics have known at least one priest in the life who is / was a saintly man they feel blessed to have known. But in the main, the experience of many Australian Catholics has been that the clergy have been a blocker, a barrier between them and God. This is possibly at the core of why very few Catholics in Australia now attend Confession / Reconciliation and only about 10% of Australian Catholics attend Mass on a regular basis. The People of God have been looking, over many years, to the priests and bishops as a bridge to God, but this is not what they found. Today, they are no longer looking for a relationship with God through an intermediary, but looking for a direct, personal relationship with God.

For those who were not comfortable completing the online submission direct to the Plenary Council, we developed an online survey by the use of the tool - Survey Monkey. The responses to this survey were as follows:

Q1: I can see a clear reflection of Jesus in the institutional church

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 7.69% | 34.62% | 7.69% | 19.23% | 30.77% |

Q2: I can see a clear reflection of Jesus in our local parish / school community

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 40.00% | 44.00% | 16.00% | 0% | 0% |

Q3: The majority of Catholics in Australia no longer attend Mass on a regular basis because we now live in a more secular society

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 19.24% | 38.46% | 7.69% | 19.23% | 15.38% |

Q4: The majority of Catholics in Australia no longer attend Mass on a regular basis because they have lost trust in the church

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 48.00% | 24.00% | 16.00% | 8.00% | 4.00% |

Q5: The majority of Catholics in Australia no longer attend Mass on a regular basis because the church does not appear relevant to their spiritual lives

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 38.46% | 34.62% | 15.38% | 7.69% | 3.85% |

Q6: For the church to be more relevant to the spiritual lives of Catholics in Australia, we need to move back to a more pre-Vatican II church

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 0% | 4.00% | 20.00% | 16.00% | 60.00% |

Q7: For the church to be more relevant to the spiritual lives of Catholics in Australia, we need to move away from an overwhelming focus on sin to a focus on love

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 56.00% | 40.00% | 0% | 4.00% | 0% |

Q8: For the church to be more relevant to the spiritual lives of Catholics in Australia, we need major changes – much less clericalism, married priests, more leadership and ministry roles for women, a more loving welcome to people who feel rejected by the church

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 76.93% | 15.38% | 0% | 7.69% | 0% |

Q9: If Jesus was to walk the earth today, what would He think of His church? What would Jesus want His church to look like today?

A9: He would be saddened by the unintended consequences of the institutionalised church structure.

He would be truly disappointed in the church today. He would like it to be more open, less regimented. Welcoming to all and less about attending Sunday mass and more about how we treat others, practise kindness, forgiveness and respect to all.

Inclusive, diverse, humble, self-aware.

He would start a new church. We have come full circle in the last 2,000 years and ended up where we started – with the people being suppressed by modern day Pharisees.

Jesus does walk amongst us every day and I'm sure he is most disappointed that people judge too much and have lost faith because of the media.

He would think it was boring. To draw the younger generation in, we need the traditional messages to be preached in a not so serious way. A lot of guilt is placed on Catholics which needs to be addressed. Jesus, I think, would like his church to be a loving, happy place for all to come to and be accepted.

Lost focus on people's everyday lives and how we each contribute in our own special way. Welcoming; simplified language; simple messages - church is not a biblical course, we can do a course at university for that.

More inclusive of all people. Instead of the church treating some people (such as LGBT people) as hellish sinners. Jesus was even nice to lepers so he would totally be for lots of people who have been declared by the institution as sinners.

I think he would want us to be examples of His attributes - forgiving, loving, compassionate and prayerful, to follow the beatitudes.

Jesus would want to see more genuine acceptance and inclusivity. He would want a church that involved itself powerfully in standing up for the marginalised, not a church that played a role in maintaining those margins. Jesus would want faith to be discussed and explored in more relevant contexts that appreciated the realities of the time and place within which he was ministering.

More inclusion of all peoples.

Today Jesus would think his church has lost its way a little bit, but that there is hope in the younger generation to rectify that. Jesus understands that the church must evolve with societal needs and changes but that the core issues in the world have not changed significantly, therefore he would hope that his church continued to display actions of preserving human dignity and supporting those in need.

Relaxed, forgiving, loving.

Jesus would not be happy. His church doesn't reflect his teachings.

You stuffed it up!! The values are worth keeping but the institution, rules, sin and punishment is all wrong. It could look like mindfulness, meditation and Buddhism without the reincarnation.

Jesus would think the church hierarchy has lost its way. He would want a more inclusive compassionate church that accepts all sinners.

He would like all religions to unite and live in peace with each other.

More compassionate, less judgemental and acceptance of everyone on an equal level - whatever your gender, sexuality, race etc.

Jesus would be saddened at the way his church has been destroyed because mankind has failed to obey the 10 ten commandments and his 2 great laws, plus what his clergy have done to vulnerable people in society which in turn has broken their soul and spirit. But most of all the loss of trust in his church and the greed for money. Today his church should be always full and have all mankind obey his commandments and laws and care for the wonderful world that he gave us, that we - mankind the worst form of living beings - are destroying.

Less judgemental, and more welcoming, with many fewer hierarchy. Hierarchy of the church living in the "real world" and in touch with ordinary people.

Jesus would not recognise the institution that has evolved in His name with the church He created. Jesus would want the leaders of His church to follow His teachings through a servant leadership model.

He would want it to be a more welcoming, inclusive church. Non-judgemental and for everyone to be treated equally.

Q10: How do we get from where we are today to where Jesus would like us to be?

A10: By listening to those who left and understanding why.

I actually don't know. It is such a gigantic gap, like the Grand Canyon, so I guess it is one small step in the right direction at a time.

Radical self-responsibility by the leaders of the Church.

Asset sales to provide ongoing support / foundation ala Gates Foundation.

Just have more faith, don't let media turn you away from the church.

By reviewing the way mass is preached and keeping to the same traditional messages. Survey the younger generation to get their ideas of what it will take to get them back in church.

Encourage activities that bring people together. Community and friendships are built and common goals and values.

Love.

I would like to see the church embrace the idea of married priests as well and women priests. I would like the church to welcome and accept homosexuals rather than perpetuating more hatred and fear. Priests need to be held accountable for criminal actions, particularly when sexual abuse has been proven.

The church needs to be a place that embodies the image of truth, hope and love. As Christians, we need to remain true to our values and as a community, we will all strive for the same goal, to be a religion that is followed not frowned upon.

Priests' marriage.

Overhaul the whole church and bring it into line with the modern world.

I don't think it is possible with the current structure or trying to teach children fairy tales. The kids grow up and realise these stories are all made up.

By the church hierarchy evaluating the current rules and making the necessary changes to make the church more inclusive.

Pray for unity, tolerance and for Him to show us the way.

Get rid of the current version of church leadership - they are no different to corrupt, power hungry politicians - we need complete diversity.

To be more concerned about how we treat others, rather than strict rules and regulations.

Do the right things mentioned in Q9 above that Jesus asked us to do in the first place, 2000 years ago.

Listening to the laity through this process is a great start. But women must be appointed to leadership roles throughout the church, at the Vatican and all the way down. The vow of obedience for ordained clergy must not be seen as 'say nothing and do as you are told'. Pope Francis has started to turn the church back towards Jesus. But the clergy who are in opposition to him must be persuaded to support our Pope.

The bishops must start to lead the church, beginning with introducing proper governance structures and processes, accepting that bishops, like all leaders, have an accountability / responsibility back to the people they lead.

Bishops must stop labelling lay people who express concern about OUR Church as disloyal. "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men [and women] to do nothing." Edmund Burke and John F Kennedy.

When will the bishops apologise to Catholics who were married by a paedophile, had their children baptised by a paedophile and their children received First Holy Communion from a paedophile? There can have been go greater heresy in the last 2,000 years than allowing a paedophile to preside at the Holy Eucharist.

Bishops should respond to letters and emails from the laity. Failure to do so is a major failing in leadership.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUBMIT THE THOUGHTS OF OUR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Thank you for this opportunity. The fact that the bishops are prepared to undertake this process of asking the laity for their input is a significant step forward. We trust that this submission will make a contribution towards the development of the agenda for the Plenary Council 2020 and to shape the future of our Church in Australia.

God bless