

# Helping to Renew our Church via Inputs to the '2020 Plenary Council'



## Capture of parish and school community responses to Question 'B'

### Introduction

With minimal editing or removal of repetition at this stage the following responses have been captured from a mix of small groups and individuals in our Parish and school communities in answer to the **second** Question (B) **“What is Christ calling us to make our Church today?”** (Listening to the Holy Spirit). These responses follow initial consideration late last year of question (A) “What does our Church look like now (Listening to each other).

Respondents included small Family groups, School groups, Friend groups, Outreach group, Men’s group, Parish Pastoral Council and individuals. As part of the process of “Listening to God by listening to one another” these extensive responses are made available here to assist in collectively considering the final Question C to shortly follow “What do we, as Church, need to do to move from A to B?” (Listening must lead us to response and action).

To assist the Australian Plenary Council 2020/2021 in its deliberations these responses together with responses to previous Question ‘A’ and subsequent ‘Question C’ to follow these responses will be refined and collectively summarised for submission to the Church’s Plenary Council agenda-setting group, and our local Archbishop Peter Comensoli, before the due date of Ash Wednesday (6 March) 2019.

### What is Christ calling us to make our Church today?

- To continue and expand the ministries of health, education and welfare in the community. To be an open, humble, welcoming, inclusive, listening, non-judgemental and transparent church. To be a synodal church involving and listening-to the faithful at all levels. To utilise the experience and knowledge of the faithful in its governance to ensure that there is compliance with all laws and the meeting of community standards and expectations.
- To be Christ centred. To be transparent in all our dealings and everything we undertake on behalf of all humanity regardless of colour, caste or creed. It is felt by many people of my generation that if women had been engaged sooner in church governance the sexual abuse crisis wouldn’t have become out of hand. My non catholic friends say Catholics are snobs and elitist. I was present at a service in St Paul’s Cathedral London recently and also Trinity College Chapel Melbourne University. Both services were officiated by wonderful, warm, competent women, fully embracing and reaching out without pomp. Very comforting all round. I agree with my husband who says we are missing out on this in our church. We need to be brave and break the pride nexus.

- I believe Christ is calling us to make our Church today: A place of welcome for all; An experience of faith which meets the hearts, souls, minds and yearnings of our young as well as older members of our community; A place where tradition/custom/set ways can open up and recognise opportunities for greater involvement of wider community in the liturgy of Mass; A place which serves as a bridge between good will and the outward expression of this good will towards others; A place of connection both personal and communal; A place of nourishment where not only the Word and the Eucharist nourishes us but equally important is the way we talk, interact with others and give time to building community.
- We need to encourage young people - children and adults - to come to Mass and to participate in the liturgy, and in parish events. Having school children assisting in reading at Mass works well.
- Christ calls for the church to lead by example, in all ways and at all times. Not just clergy but all people who say they are Christian also need to lead by their examples. Many leading clergy lead lives similar to very rich people. It is time for clergy to be as ordinary people and to work with them and not pontificate from above. All the church needs to be like many other current priests and nuns who live lives in Christ's name. The Church must be open to all, exist in the modern world and respond to the needs of the people in these times – where there is much stress, anxiety, family conflict etc. The Church should be there for all and allow others outside the clergy to lead and contribute as well - no more closed shop. Church attendances are falling at an exponential rate - we need to take the Church to where people and needs are. It must be relevant to a modern world and provide support and approaches for people to live good lives.
- The Church needs to acknowledge that its teachings must accept the findings of modern science (- from a Catholic educated 20 y.o. young man who seldom, if ever, goes to Church).
- The Church needs to recall Vatican II and review outdated thinking. It must show an open and truly generous response to victims of Child sexual abuse.
- Continue appreciating the beauty of the Eucharistic meal, the music, and the homily while witnessing to a new way of thinking beyond gender, not covering up for the current image of the Church when its wrong doing arise. It should focus ahead rather than on past rules.
- As Jesus was the Church should also be inclusive, and not judgemental.
- The Church should be relevant to today's needs.
- The Church should be more transparent in adversity.
- Female priests and married priests should be considered. Look at how these work in other religions.
- There should be greater emphasis on social justice and more visibility for the Church's existing involvement in this.
- Knowing that 'God the Father' loves us all the Church should call us to be responsible for our own actions, accept our differences, and not judge others.
- Service to the poor and vulnerable is more important than owning Church buildings that are 95% empty most of the time. A Faith Community can meet anywhere (e.g. in a hall, or even Tennis Court).
- The Church should value empathy and compassion more than power.
- All should be welcomed, showing Christ's never-failing love for each of us.

- Realise fully that Christ calls all people not just those it 'finds acceptable'.
- We should listen to survivors of abuse and their advocates.
- Provide a safe place for those who have been hurt, to sit and cry if that is what they need to do.
- There should be true gender equality and acceptance of same-sex marriage.
- Focus on caring for all of creation and all our brothers and sisters.
- We need to decide how to provide consistent service to the poor and vulnerable.
- Respond to Christ's message to welcome, love and care for one another without judgement, support those who are sick, disabled, blind, deaf and need care.
- Church should be dynamic, open minded, warm, totally accepting of the 'other'.
- Compassionate, welcoming, loving, empathetic, non-judgemental.
- How do we know we are inspired by the Holy Spirit?
- How did the sacraments start? When, and by whom?
- What is the connection between the grandeur and the teachings of Christ?
- Do humans need pomp to impress?
- What about Christ's admonition about selling all and giving to those in need?
- Are we doing all we can to help develop the confidence, skills and abilities of people?
- There should be more models of nuns/religious communities impressively available to assist people in need (e.g. child minding, education etc.) – such as the 'Caravan sisters'.
- The Church needs credibility based on truly being a living witness, based on gospel values and built up from local communities.
- The Church needs to be open to a mixed community, of all ages.
- Ongoing process for upward movement of opinions. Structure needs to provide opportunity for all to influence Church decisions. It should be synodal via plenary and other processes.
- Church governance should include a major role for lay of all ages, including youth, and clergy to participate.
- Inclusive, respectful, relevant and up-to-date.
- Church must be honest, uphold and stand up for what we believe, outward looking, serving, listening and responding to the community, tolerant, as a living beacon of hope and generous in spirit in a challenged world.
- Structure must ensure all laity and clergy are not ignored.
- Christ's words and actions need to be copied in the context of today's world and thinking.
- The Church should empower all its members and break down its hierarchy.
- Church needs to make clear what is 'right' and 'wrong', who is included.
- Congregations are often more educated than clergy in today's world. The Church needs to 'grow up', understand and evolve into the 1<sup>st</sup> world.
- Women who reflect 50% of the Holy Spirit are effectively non-existent in the Church Hierarchy.
- Fewer 'rules', show respect, 'listen' and 'respond' to all, including youth, be non-judgemental.
- The Church is 'all of us' and needs to be more Christ like. Catholics need to be serious about our faith and integrate faith beliefs in our everyday lives.
- People today aren't motivated as in the past, but by passion for our living (gospel) values in today's world.

- Listen to the Holy Spirit. Build upon our thoughts, practical resources and skills wherever God leaves us. We are facing the same challenges as our early Christian communities in their time.
- Need to make liturgies relevant to all – including young, older, progressives.
- A more accountable Church throughout (internationally, nationally, in dioceses, in parishes)
- Need to educate all Church members of all ages that we are collectively the Church in today's world, driven by Christ's teachings. Based on collective discernment the presently declining Church should empower and warmly encourage active engagement by all, using all our diverse thoughts, conscience and skills.