



Plenary Council 2020

Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

Welcome to PlenaryPost

Over a period of six weeks, the Plenary Council team, in partnership with the National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPR), published [a series of "snapshot reports"](#) relevant to each of the six National Themes for Discernment. This past Sunday, the NCPR published the final report to summarise the Listening and Dialogue phase of the Plenary Council.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying captures the voices of the more than 222,000 people who made an individual submission to the Plenary Council or were part of the thousands of groups -- large and small -- who made a joint submission. The report seeks to share the threads and topics that emerged in the 17,457 submissions, in people's questions and in their stories of faith.

At 314 pages, the document is comprehensive and, as NCPR director Trudy Dantis explains, the report is "faithful to the stories told, the questions asked and the opinions shared". Read more about *Listen to what the Spirit is saying*

below.

An introduction to discernment



FacilitatorFocus:

Faithful show a spirit of
generosity, resilience and love

by Lana Turvey-Collins



Last week, the applications for the Discernment and Writing Groups for the

second stage of the Plenary Council closed and the process of shortlisting the 260 applicants has now begun. We have been inspired by the level of engagement and responses from so many people around the country.

Our office has received many expressions of interest, questions, concerns and an overwhelming number of people offering their skills and talents to help in any way they could. Amidst this process of recruitment, we have also had the opportunity to hear the stories of Australians who opened their hearts to share their reasons for putting their hands up to serve.

These stories are points of connection that remind me of the resilient spirit and deep love for our Church that each person possesses, despite the divergent perspectives we may have. It is the individuality and uniqueness of this love that I hope our journey towards the Plenary Council captures.

In the coming weeks, we will be inviting you to share your voice again by participating in a new Listening and Discernment resource that will be launched on the Plenary Council website. This resource invites you, together with your community, to discern how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is: Missionary and evangelising; Inclusive, participatory and synodal; Prayerful and Eucharistic; Humble, healing and merciful; A joyful, hope-filled and servant community, open to conversion renewal and reform.

Thank you to everyone for your kindness, generosity of spirit, passion and faith. It has been a privilege to listen to the voices of the people of God and I highly commend the final report, [available on the Plenary Council website](#), to you as we enter into this critical stage of discernment.

CuriosityCorner

We will address a new question in each e-newsletter. To catch up on previous editions, you can check out [the Plenary Council FAQ page](#). If you have a question, email it to us and we will include it in future editions of **PlenaryPost**.

The question for today is...

What is the purpose of the final report of the Listening and Dialogue phase?

The report, *Listen to what the Spirit is saying*, provides a summary of the voices of the people of God who participated in the Listening and Dialogue phase of the Plenary Council. That was compiled using best-practice research and analysis tools and methods, reading the submissions that were received and listening to the voices represented in those submissions.

This report captures people's responses to the question "What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?", as well as their stories of faith and questions for the Council.

TalkTheology

A unique resource for the Church in Australia

by Fr Noel Connolly SSC, Plenary Council Facilitation Team

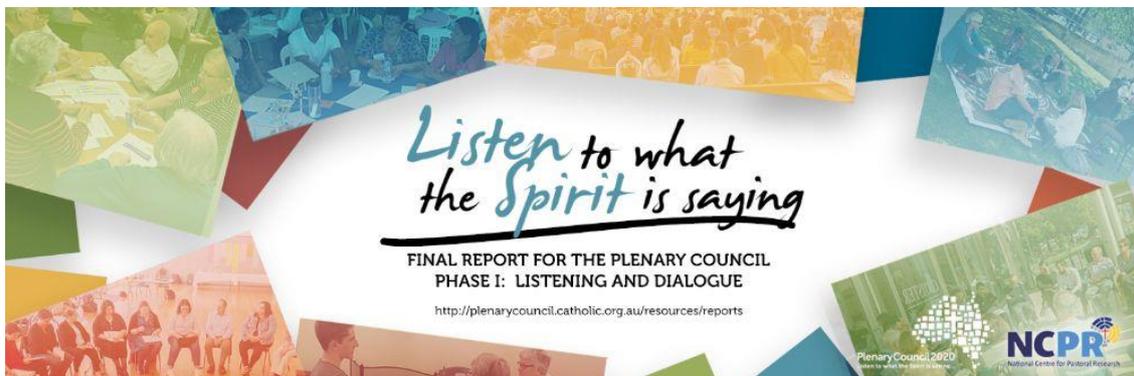
In *Listen to what the Spirit is saying*, we have an exceptional expression of the sense of the faithful. We will need patient discernment to grasp the voice of the Holy Spirit among the enthusiastic, strongly held but sometimes contradictory voices of the people of God. We will also need humility and a generous openness to all. It is too easy for us to decide who has the *sensus fidei* and who should be listened to.

Individual believers who are committed to their spiritual lives and live a sacramental life will have a special insight. However, few of us live full Christian lives. We all have blind spots. We also need to listen to our prophets.

We need to attend to the victims of child abuse, to gay Catholics and divorced Catholics and all those who are marginalised and find themselves in “ecclesial exile”. Given the sins of the Church in recent times, there are many of these and many who have great faith.

[Click here to read Fr Noel's full article.](#)

News&Notes



Report listens to what the Spirit is saying

The voices, stories and questions of more than 222,000 people have been captured in *Listen to what the Spirit is saying*, the final report of the Listening and Dialogue phase of the Plenary Council.

Published on Sunday, July 28, the report follows a series of snapshot reports on each of the six National Themes for Discernment. The final report, which runs for 314 pages and [can be downloaded here](#), looks at the process of the

Plenary Council so far and highlights the common threads and topics that emerged in almost 17,500 submissions.

Plenary Council president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB said the listening undertaken in the Council's first phase "has produced an extraordinary treasure of ideas and proposals which represents the heartfelt response of many people".

"The great challenge ahead of us now is to 'catch' the voice of the Holy Spirit within the passionate, hopeful but sometimes contradictory voices of God's people," he said, acknowledging that a process of open listening has led to some people being "challenged and even disturbed" by some of the responses.

"The ongoing journey of the Plenary Council provides us all with an opportunity to deepen our own reflection in the light of what other members of the Church have expressed, as together we now enter into the next phase of the journey: the Listening and Discernment phase," Archbishop Costelloe said.

[Click here to read the media release announcing the final report's publication.](#)



Brisbane prepares for diocesan assembly

More than 600 people are expected to later this year attend the Brisbane Assembly, an event building towards the Plenary Council 2020.

Eric Robinson, the Archdiocese of Brisbane's Plenary Council co-ordinator, said the Brisbane Assembly will be "a really high-quality experience of listening and discernment" that builds on the Plenary Council process so far.

"My hope is that people walk away from the assembly with hope and feeling empowered about this plenary journey and their role in it," Mr Robinson told *The Catholic Leader*.

"We really need to hear from the broad spectrum of those people in the Church. If there was ever a time to engage and share what you feel God is asking of the Church today – this whole process is set up to listen to the spirit of the people."

[Click here to read more from *The Catholic Leader*.](#)



Plenary Council drawing international interest

The general secretaries of the episcopal conferences of Germany, France and England and Wales have used their visit to Australia to learn more about the Plenary Council process unfolding in this country.

Fr Christopher Thomas from the Bishops Conference of England and Wales saw the Plenary Council as "a bold step because it's most definitely not a top-down approach. It's a listening and discerning exercise which I think the Church, under the leadership of Pope Francis, is certainly being encouraged to take," he said.

Fr Thierry Magnin, from the French bishops conference, said he too was "very impressed" by the way the Church in Australia has embraced the concept of synodality, saying the Plenary Council provides an example for how the Church can better engage with the faithful.

[Click here to read the full story from *Media Blog*.](#)



Plenary Council provides teachable moment

A newspaper columnist says the varied opinions expressed in submissions to the Plenary Council demonstrates the need for ongoing catechesis for Catholics in Australia.

Philippa Martyr, writing in *The Catholic Weekly*, said the snapshot reports published by the National Centre for Pastoral Research rang true with the experience she encountered at a Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue session. She said that like in the reports, some of the individuals in her gathering held contrasting views on various aspects of the Catholic faith.

"So what to do? At the very least, it's clear we have to help this puzzled generation with sound catechesis on the authentic deposit of faith. Perhaps if we can get that right, we will be in a better position to help the even smaller number of middle-aged and younger Catholics in the pews as well," she wrote.

[Click here for the full article in *The Catholic Weekly*.](#)

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