



## Sharing the voice of Christian Initiation with the Plenary Council

### Plenary Council Question:

What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

1. Pray together 10 minutes
- 2.1 Read the question 30 minutes
- 2.2 Read the support material (from the encyclical the *Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel*, foundation document of this Council.)
3. Share & Listen 45 minutes
  - 3.1 Reflect: what have I experienced in this area?
  - 3.2 Share: a story of your experience in this area
  - 3.3 Reflect: how another perspective influences you
  - 3.4 Share: how another perspective influenced you
4. Pray & Respond 5 minutes
  - 4.1 Finish with Prayer
  - 4.2 Respond on-line
  - 4.3  
(The Team Leader will need extra time to respond on-line to the Plenary Council Committee about the discussion)

### What is a Plenary Council?

The Australian Catholic Bishops have called for the 2020 Plenary Council, approved by Pope Francis. It is a formal gathering, where the affairs of the Church are considered in light of significant changes within society or crises of faith at any particular time. This Council has invited all clergy, religious, and most importantly, all the laity to participate, offering our voice to the discussions. The theme of our responses will be addressed by working parties, who will format our responses for the Plenary discussions.

### Christian Initiation in the Enquiry Period for the Plenary Council

In the Enquiry Period, RCIA groups are invited to read the supporting material from *Evangelii Gaudium*, (EG) *the Joy of the Gospel*, a foundation document for the Plenary Council. This activity begins to open converts to Church documents; values their opinions; and encourages them to reflect with us on this important question. Pray together; share and listen to each other's responses. The Council needs to hear from *the whole Church*, even those on their conversion journey. Your team leader will collate the discussion and submit this to the Plenary Council Committee on-line.

## 1 Pray Together

### Plenary Council Prayer

**Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost.  
Come, Holy Spirit of the great South Land.  
O God, bless and unite all your  
people in Australia and  
guide us on the pilgrim way  
of the Plenary Council.  
Give us the grace to see your face  
in one another and  
to recognise Jesus, our companion on the road.  
Give us the courage to tell our stories  
and to speak boldly of your truth.  
Give us ears to listen humbly to each other  
and a discerning heart to hear  
what you are saying.  
Lead your Church into a hope-filled future,  
that we may live the joy of the Gospel.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
bread for the journey from age to age.  
Amen**

### In keeping with this stage of RCIA, groups are invited to begin with an adaption of the Signing of the Senses Prayer [RCIA #56]

(The leader invites participants to bless the senses of the person beside them)

**Leader:** May we listen to what the Spirit is saying to each of us, as we learn to walk in the light of Christ, trusting in His wisdom.

**Leader:** Receive the Sign of the Cross on your ears, that we may be open and listen to each other's voices.

**Leader:** Receive the Sign of the Cross on your lips, that we may respond to The Word of God.

**Leader:** Receive the Sign of the Cross over your heart, that Christ may dwell there by faith.

**Leader:** Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

**Leader:** Lord through this blessing, which we have received, may each of us be united as one in You.

**All: Amen**

## 2 Read Question & Support Material

What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

I invite all, ... to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting Him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for them, since 'no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.' [EG 3 Paul VI Exhortation Gaudete in Domino 297]

Sometimes we are tempted to find excuses and complain, acting as if we could only be happy if a thousand conditions were met. To some extent this is because our technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy. [EG 7 Paul VI Exhortation Gaudete in Domino 292]

Thanks solely to renewed encounter with God's love, which blossoms into enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we ... let God bring us beyond ourselves ... to attain the fullest truth of our being. [EG 8]

Many are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see His face...all of them have the right to receive the Gospel. [EG 15]

God's word is unpredictable in its power. The Gospel speaks of a seed which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps. Listen to what the Spirit is saying... [EG 22 Rev 2:7]

Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and discarded. We have created a 'throw away' culture which is now spreading ... The excluded are not the exploited but the outcast, the 'leftovers'. [EG 53]

We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in our homes, ... [EG 71]

'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. [EG 85 2 Cor 12:9]

But family and the workplace can also be a parched place where faith has to be preserved and communicated. Yet it is in starting from the experience of this desert, that we can again discover the joy of believing...in the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living...there are innumerable signs, ...of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life.' [EG 86]

God has found a way to unite Himself to every human being in every age, called together as a people. [EG 113]

Culture is a dynamic reality which a people constantly recreates; each generation ... confronts its own challenges. [EG 122]

This is always a slow process and we can be overly fearful. But if we allow our doubts to dampen our courage, instead of being creative we will remain comfortable with no progress. [EG129]

The secret lies in the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weakness and failings. [EG 141]

Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to strengthen you. [EG 164]

The Synod Fathers spoke of the importance of respect for religious freedom, viewed as a fundamental right...(continued)

... 'the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one's beliefs in public.' [EG 255]

To believe in a Father who loves all, with an infinite love means realising that 'He thereby confers upon you an infinite dignity.' To believe that Jesus shed His blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennoble each human being. To believe the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means He seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds. [EG 178, St JP II, Message to the Handicapped 1232]

If we are to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves, we also have to realise that every person is worthy of our giving...because they are God's handiwork, His creation. God created that person in His image, and they reflect something of God's glory...every person is immensely holy and deserves our love. [EG 274]

## 3 Share & Listen

- 3.1 Reflect: what have I experienced in this area?
- 3.2 Share: a story of your experience in this area
- 3.3 Reflect: how another perspective influences you
- 3.4 Share: how another perspective influenced you



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## 4. Pray & Respond

### Closing Prayer

**Creator God, we thank You for the encounter with one another today. We know that where two or three are gathered, You are in our midst. Thank You for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and with passion; and have the humility to listen with open hearts to one another.**

**We ask You to continue to walk with us, as we discover the pathway toward the future You are calling us to. Amen**

**Respond by submitting online:**

*Remember our voice is important in responding to what God is asking of us in Australia*  
**[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)**

On the Plenary Council webpage, you will find a SUBMISSION link.