



## ParishGuide

Leading your parish community to be part of the Plenary Council 2020.

### Welcome

Thank you for taking the initiative to ensure that your parish community is a part of the Plenary Council 2020. Every person's story and experience of faith, and the Church, is important and it is essential that every effort is made to reach out and include as many people as possible as we endeavour to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

### Using this Guide

These few pages are a practical guide to getting started in your parish community. This is accompanied by the *Listening and Dialogue Encounter*.

Below you will find a suggested week-by-week program of activities to lead your parish community and ensure they are able to give their voice to the Plenary Council 2020.

These activities are simply suggestions and only a beginning. The intent of this guide is to provide an introduction – something just to get started, to ignite your community's imagination and encourage all people to participate, bringing their gifts and talents together to reach as many parts of your local neighbourhood community and consider together the future to which God is calling the Church in Australia.

### Questions, Ideas and Feedback

As you use this guide, sharing your experience can help others. If you have ideas for how this guide can be improved, questions you need answered or pictures of your community coming together for listening and dialogue, please contact us on the details below:

*Plenary Council Facilitation Team*

**Phone:** 02 9919 7800  
**Mobile:** 0481 915 201  
**Email:** [plenary.council@catholic.org.au](mailto:plenary.council@catholic.org.au)

Speak boldly,  
and listen with  
open and  
humble hearts.



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Listen to what the Spirit is saying...









## Preparing Yourself

The moment you begin sharing information about the Plenary Council, people will naturally ask you questions. You do not have to be the knower of all information, but it will help your confidence levels if you do have a good handle on the basics.

- Step 1 Visit the Plenary Council website and explore:  
[www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)
- Step 2 Read the Theology page:  
<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/pages/about-us/theology/>
- Step 3 Read the FAQs page:  
<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/frequently-asked-questions/>
- Step 4 Watch the Plenary Council Videos:  
<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/watch/>
- Step 5 Subscribe to the Plenary Council e-newsletter: **PlenaryPost**  
(There is a pop-up box which will appear when you log onto the webpage)

## Working Together, Finding a Team

Bringing a few people together can help to get things moving a little more quickly than doing things by yourself. Think about who is in your community and contact the leaders. Invite them to help you to get the local community involved in the Plenary Council. Here are some suggestions for a small parish community working group to collaborate together:

-  Parish pastoral secretary
-  Parish pastoral associate
-  Youth leader / young couple
-  Parish pastoral council member(s) and/or finance council members
-  Primary school Principal
-  Secondary school Principal / Year Coordinator / Religious Education Coordinator
-  Local aged care / community services representative
-  Local councillor / community leader



## Engaging people through the Parish Mass

Below is a week-by-week activity guide for communicating the Plenary Council at Mass on Sundays. You are welcome to use some or all of this and you're encouraged to add your own ideas.

### Week1      **Announcing the Plenary Council 2020**

In the first week, the aim is to simply introduce the Plenary Council and let your community know that it is an important event for the future of the Church in Australia happening in 2020. The main message is that every person's voice is important and over the coming weeks we will learn more about it and importantly how everyone can be involved.

- ✚ Play the Plenary Council promotional video (If you do not have audio-visual equipment, simply communicate the same message as the video, and encourage people to watch it at home). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exNXH2YcB8Y&feature=youtu.be>
- ✚ Intercessory Prayers, Week 1 (*Appendix 1*).
- ✚ During the Mass, pray the Plenary Council Prayer together.
- ✚ Homily Notes / Announcements, Week 1 (*Appendix 2*).
- ✚ Parish Bulletin Notice, Week 1 (*Appendix 3*).

### Week2      **Learning a little bit more...**

In the second week, the aim is to introduce a little more of the “nuts and bolts” information to the community and promote the website. Importantly, encourage people to sign up to the e-newsletter **PlenaryPost** to stay up to date, and ‘Like’ the [Plenary Council Facebook page](#).

- ✚ Play the video from Archbishop Timothy Costelloe: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRVY7\\_uYCM4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRVY7_uYCM4)
- ✚ Intercessory Prayers, Week 2 (*Appendix 1*).
- ✚ During the Mass, pray the Plenary Council Prayer together.
- ✚ Homily Notes / Announcements, Week 2 (*Appendix 2*).
- ✚ Parish Bulletin Notice, Week 2 (*Appendix 3*).



## Parish Action Idea: Food and Friendship Evening

For those people in the parish who want to know more information and want to learn about the Plenary Council together, you can host an information evening during the week.

You can invite people to bring a plate and eat together while you play the video recorded by the facilitator for the Plenary Council, Lana Turvey-Collins. For further information, you can read through the FAQs on the website together and talk about what this could mean for you as a parish community. You can also list any additional questions you have as a group and email them through to your local diocesan working group or the facilitation team at [plenary.council@catholic.org.au](mailto:plenary.council@catholic.org.au).

### Week3 You're invited to host/join a small group.

In the third week, the aim is to promote the *Listening and Dialogue Encounter* and invite people to form small groups (similar to Lenten groups). This is so that people create time and space to consider the question: ***"What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?"***

You might like to schedule some times and locations in advance for when Plenary Council listening and dialogue groups will meet each week for the next 4-6 weeks.

Alternatively, you can make the invitation this week for hosts, and put together a list of times and locations next week, which then parishioners and others can choose to join.

- ✚ Play the video from Archbishop Timothy Costelloe (repeat):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRVY7\\_uYCM4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRVY7_uYCM4)
- ✚ Intercessory Prayers, Week 3 (*Appendix 1*).
- ✚ During the Mass, pray the Plenary Council Prayer together.
- ✚ Homily Notes / Announcements, Week 3 (*Appendix 2*).
- ✚ Parish Bulletin Notice, Week 3 (*Appendix 3*).



## Week 4-6 Get involved – it’s not too late!

In the fourth week, the aim is to continue promoting the *Listening and Dialogue Encounter* and invite people to create time and space in small groups to consider the question: “**What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?**”

For those people who have begun a small group, encourage them in their journey.

For those who want to join a small group, find them a place in a group that has just begun or encourage them to host a small group of their own.

- ✚ Intercessory Prayers, Week 4-6 (*Appendix 1*).
- ✚ During the Mass, pray the Plenary Council Prayer together.
- ✚ Homily Notes / Announcements, Week 4-6 (*Appendix 2*).
- ✚ Parish Bulletin Notice, Week 4-6 (*Appendix 3*).

PRAY  
TOGETHER

READ QUESTION  
AND REFLECT

SHARE AND  
LISTEN

PRAY AND  
RESPOND

## Week 7 Sharing the Story

In the seventh week, the aim is to include those in your congregation who are not part of a small group. During the Mass, you could invite two people to share about their experience of the small groups and tell the congregation some of the topics that their small group has been discussing. This type of testimony can be followed by an invitation for people to create time and space at home in the coming week to consider the question: “**What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?**” and invite them to complete their response online.

- ✚ Play the sketch video explaining the three-stage process. This will detail how each person’s response will help to develop the agenda for the Plenary Council.
- ✚ Intercessory Prayers, Week 7 (*Appendix 1*).
- ✚ During the Mass, pray the Plenary Council Prayer together.
- ✚ Homily Notes / Announcements, Week 7 (*Appendix 2*).
- ✚ Parish Bulletin Notice, Week 7 (*Appendix 3*).

Your voice is needed.

The agenda for the Plenary Council will be developed from your stories of faith and the Church.



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## Week 8 Continue the Habit of Dialogue

In the eighth week, the aim is to affirm that the voice from the people in your parish and neighbourhood community is important and has been heard. In the dialogue and reflection, together you have responded to the question: ***“What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?”*** and your responses have helped to build and shape the Plenary Council agenda.

- ✚ Intercessory Prayers, Week 8 (*Appendix 1*).
- ✚ During the Mass, pray the Plenary Council Prayer together.
- ✚ Homily Notes / Announcements, Week 8 (*Appendix 2*).
- ✚ Parish Bulletin Notice, Week 8 (*Appendix 3*).

Together, we are listening to God by listening to one another.

## After the eight-week cycle: What now? Next Steps...



In the listening and dialogue process, people may have talked about ideas that could be implemented immediately in your local parish community or neighbourhood. Speak with your Church leaders about how further thought and taking action on some of these suggestions and ideas might move forward in practical ways.



The aim of the eight-week process of Listening and Dialogue in your parish community has been to create a *habit* of speaking with one another and telling stories about experiences of faith, and the Church, praying together and listening for God’s voice in one another’s stories. This way of being a community together can help to break down barriers and create more understanding of one another – becoming a Church community that is more loving, vulnerable, welcoming and full of life. Continuing to use a *dialogical approach* in your community is encouraged.



Prayer is the centre of the journey toward the Plenary Council. Praying in as many ways and as many places as possible is something everyone can be invited to be a part of. The Plenary Council prayer and song are helpful for this, or you can write your own.





## Activating Your Parish Community: Hints, Tips and Ideas

Below are some ideas to make it as easy as possible for people in your community to contribute to the Plenary Council process – and, importantly, to ask others to do so.

If you have a small team helping to animate local activity for the Plenary Council, you can brainstorm with these ideas and share the workload. Also, as time passes, you might have new ideas and you can invite others to take on some responsibilities and contribute their gifts to the process.

- ✚ Every week, between now and Ash Wednesday 2019, put a **notice in your parish bulletin** about the Plenary Council. It can be the same invitation reprinted each week, or you could ask someone to be creative and allocate this responsibility to them.
- ✚ Print the Plenary Council prayer onto **posters** and put them up around the church, the parish office, in the school staffroom, office and classrooms and the parish hall.
- ✚ **Print copies of the Listening and Dialogue Encounter** and leave them in your church, in the school staffroom and in the parish office. Add an invitation note: Please take one home – Your voice is needed!
- ✚ Every week, **pray for the Plenary Council** in the Intercessory Prayers and by praying the Plenary Council prayer together. It is essential that our listening, dialogue and discernment is grounded in prayer – this is the most important action that everyone can help with!
- ✚ Send the Plenary Council **prayer cards** to all parishioners, give them to all staff and students at the school and ask them to pray. Also place them in the pews at the Church.
- ✚ Invite your music ministry (particularly your youth music ministry) to **learn the Plenary Council song: “Listen”**. Over a number of weeks, teach it to your congregation and join together in song.
- ✚ Invite your parish small groups to share from their Listening and Dialogue experiences.
- ✚ Join together with the school or neighbouring parishes and **host some Listening and Dialogue Encounters**. These can be open invitation – so that those who are in small groups can come along, but so too can parents from the schools, members from the community and anyone who might be associated with the Catholic Church in your local neighbourhood. Contact your Diocesan Working Group for support.







## Appendix 1 Intercessory Prayers

- Week 1 For the Plenary Council: As we begin our parish journey, Lord, grant us the courage to speak boldly and the ability to listen humbly and always with a heart open to what the Spirit wants for the Church. Lord hear us.
- Week 2 For the Plenary Council: Lord, we pray that you accompany us on this pathway and grant that the preparation and celebration of the Plenary Council may renew the Church and make it humbler and more hopeful and beautiful. Lord hear us.
- Week 3 For the Plenary Council: As we commence our Listening and Dialogue small groups, help us to become a synodal Church that listens, and realises that listening “is more than simply hearing”. We pray that we listen deeply to one another and that the stories of our faith and the Church transform our hearts. Lord hear us.
- Week 4 For the Plenary Council: In our Listening and Dialogue, give us wisdom so that we may each profoundly answer the question, “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?” Help us to put aside our own egos and issues to hear God’s voice as we try to “listen to what the Spirit is saying”. Lord hear us.
- Week 5 For the Plenary Council: Lord, encourage and strengthen us when our dialogue gets messy and we cannot see where the Spirit is leading us. May we come to appreciate that this is often the way the Spirit works. Lord hear us.
- Week 6 For the Plenary Council: Lord, may we appreciate that listening means being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good. Lord hear us.
- Week 7 For the Plenary Council: Lord, as we continue to prepare for our Plenary Council, help us to reach out beyond ourselves to engage the voices of others: young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the poor, the unemployed, the LGBT community, and those who are disillusioned or have been hurt by the Church. Lord hear us.
- Week 8 For the Plenary Council: As we come together as a parish community to respond, Jesus, give us more profound faith, greater courage, deeper spirituality and the ability to discern. Lord hear us.





## Appendix 2 Homily Notes / Announcements

The notes below can either be woven into the homily during the Mass and linked to the readings of the day. Alternatively, they can be a few points for announcements either before or after the liturgy.

### Week 1

- ✚ The Plenary Council is a gathering of the Church in Australia to take stock of where we are and work to understand the context and society around us. It provides an opportunity for us to consider how we can be the presence and witness of Jesus amidst contemporary Australian society and discern the future God is calling us to as a Church.
- ✚ The Plenary Council will be held in two sessions: the first in October 2020 in Adelaide, the second in May 2021 in Sydney. Approximately 250 people will be delegates attending the Plenary Council sessions.
- ✚ The agenda for the Plenary Council will be developed from the “sense of faith” amongst the people of God in Australia. In the next couple of weeks as a parish, we will learn more about how we can make a contribution and also invite others to do so.

### Week 2

- ✚ The Plenary Council is held in three stages: preparation, celebration and implementation. Preparation is from now until the first session of the Council. Celebration of the Council will be the two sessions being held in October 2020 in Adelaide and in May 2021 in Sydney. Implementation is the ongoing life of the Church and her people after the Plenary Council session.
- ✚ Preparation for the Plenary Council begins with ***open Listening and Dialogue***. It is the first step to preparing the agenda for the Plenary Council. We will explore this in more detail next week.
- ✚ All people connected with the Catholic Church are invited to reflect on the question: “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?”
- ✚ Next week in our parish we will commence small groups for the Listening and Dialogue Encounters. These will function in a similar way to Lenten groups. If you would like to initiate a group or be part of a group, please register your details with the parish office.





### Week3

- ✚ The Plenary Council in 2020 is about the future of the Church. To prepare, we all are invited to reflect on the question: ***“What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?”***
- ✚ This week, in our parish community, we will commence small groups – like Lenten groups, but this time we are gathering to pray, talk and listen to one another about our experiences of faith and the Church. It’s a simple experience. There is a guide to help you and over a number of weeks, your group can choose the topics you wish to focus on.
- ✚ Everyone is invited to speak freely and honestly, sharing from your heart. Pope Francis speaks of our Church being a *synodal* Church – a listening Church – and in this process of Listening and Dialogue, we are called to listen to one another, and in doing this try to listen to God. For it is in encountering one another that we encounter Jesus.

### Week4-6

#### Excerpts from Theology page on the Plenary Council website

During these weeks, small groups will be forming, beginning to discuss various topics and experiences of their faith and the Church. Some points below provide an introduction to the theological perspective of the preparation toward the Plenary Council, in order to accompany the practical experience of listening and dialogue.

- ✚ The Scripture reference for the Plenary Council 2020 is “Listen to what the Spirit is saying”. It is a passage from the book of Revelation.
- ✚ Vatican II taught that the Church should be more dialogic and participatory in its processes, involving all the baptised in the Church. The Council teaches that the whole Church has been given the gift of divine revelation, as well as the gift to interpret it faithfully.
- ✚ Access to the Holy Spirit comes through a special gift that all people who are baptised have received at their Baptism when they are anointed with chrism. That gift is called “a sense for the faith” (*sensus fidei*). The whole Church together has this special gift, what is called “the faithful’s sense of the faith” (*sensus fidelium*).
- ✚ Through this, Vatican II teaches, the Church is “infallible in believing”. So, this “sense of the faithful” is a sacred conduit for finding out what God is asking of us in Australia at this present time.



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## Week 7

- Over recent weeks, people in our parish community have been sharing stories with one another about their experiences of faith and the Church. As one person speaks about their experience, the others have listened. In this way, we have been exploring our “sense of the faith” amidst our own community.
- We would like to share some of the topics that people have been talking about with you all now... [Either have some people talk to the congregation about their experiences, alternatively list topics that have been shared with you].

## Week 8

- This habit of Listening and Dialoguing with one another is sacred and we will continue this way of interacting with one another in our parish community going forward.
- Additionally, what you have shared about we can continue to explore in our own local neighbourhood. This is our community and we can work together respond here locally. [Share with the congregation any practical steps you are taking.]
- We have experienced this as a community in our parish, but this doesn't prevent you from reaching out to others in coming months and inviting them also to dialogue with you and respond. The Listening and Dialogue stage of preparation is open until Ash Wednesday 2019.
- Finally, the dialogue and listening that has happened in small groups is our community's voice. It is essential for this to be heard. If we have not already done so, please send in your responses – you can do this directly online to the Plenary Council, or you can email it to the parish and we will submit it online together.

**The Plenary Council webpage has a wealth of resources available.**

 <b>Watch</b> <a href="#">VIEW MORE</a>	 <b>Listen</b> <a href="#">VIEW MORE</a>	 <b>Read</b> <a href="#">VIEW MORE</a>	 <b>Have Your Say</b> <a href="#">VIEW MORE</a>
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## Appendix3 Bulletin Notices

- Week1** The **Plenary Council 2020** is a gathering of the Church in Australia to make decisions for the future. Your voice is important. All people are invited to contribute to the Plenary Council agenda by sharing your experience of faith and of the Church. See [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) for more information.
- Week2** Preparation for the Plenary Council 2020 begins with **open Listening and Dialogue**. It is the first step to preparing the agenda for the Plenary Council. Your experience of faith and the Church is important. Read about how you can #shareyourstory at [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au).
- Week3** You are invited to host or join a small group for Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue Encounters. Register your interest with the parish office on 07 xxx xxx. We are gathering to pray, talk and listen to one another about our experiences of faith, and the Church. Read more about this at [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)
- Week4-6** The Plenary Council agenda will be developed from the stories you share and the questions you raise. To join a small group for Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue, please contact the parish office. All people are welcome – come along, and bring a friend. Visit [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) for more information.
- [Alternative] Your voice is needed! Join a small group for conversation about your experiences of faith, and the Church. Together, we are responding to the question: **“What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?”** Visit [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) for more information.
- Week7** Over recent weeks, our parish community has been meeting in small groups for Listening and Dialogue sessions in order to contribute our voice to the Plenary Council 2020. Some of the topics that have been discussed in our community are: xxx, xxx, xxx and xxx. This week, we will send our responses in online. Thank you to all involved. Visit [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) for more information.
- Week8** Thank you to everyone who participated in small groups and gave their voice to the Plenary Council 2020. If you want to #shareyourstory and contribute to the agenda, visit [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) to read about getting involved. Subscribe to the Plenary Council e-newsletter **PlenaryPost** for the latest updates and news of what’s happening across Australia.



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## Alternative Bulletin Graphics

Listening to God by listening to one another.  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

Share your story, your voice is needed.  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

Speak boldly, listen humbly and with an open heart.  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

**Parish listening and dialogue small groups starting this week. Join in, register today, and invite a friend.**  
**#shareyourstory**  
**#listentotheSpirit**  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

**Parish listening and dialogue session:**  
Tuesday October 7  
7.00pm – 8.30pm  
St Joseph's School hall.  
Come along, bring snacks, share your story. All welcome.  
**#listentotheSpirit**  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

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## Listening and Dialogue in Small Groups:

