



**Plenary Council 2020**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...



Solemnity of Our Lady of Help of Christians  
Patroness of Australia  
24th May, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**Plenary Council 2020**  
**What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?**

The Plenary Council for the Church in Australia is going to take place over two sessions: The first in 2020 and the second in 2021. A Plenary Council is a forum for Church leaders to consider contemporary issues in the light of the Gospel and to respond in terms of faith, morals, governance, discipline and worship. The participants at a Plenary Council include all the Bishops as well as some priests, religious institute leaders, and lay people. The Bishops have a deliberative vote and others have a consultative vote. A Plenary Council can enact laws which, subject to approval by the Holy See, bind Catholics in a region, in this case Australia.

At Pentecost 2018 the Church in Australia launched the first phase of preparation for the Plenary Council. This first phase is a year of consultations, open dialogue and listening. These consultations are not intended to develop a “shopping list” of changes people want to see made or to overturn the teachings of the Church. Rather they are an opportunity for the broader Church community to reflect on and consider current issues and then to provide feedback to the Council members so they can deliberate on them. Submissions received will assist in developing the agenda for the actual Plenary Council.

Attached is a 4-step process for a Listening and Dialogue Encounter which you may like to utilise when reflecting on the key question “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?” Parishes (and individuals if they wish) are then invited to make their submission to me at [plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au](mailto:plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au) It is important that I hear and have the opportunity to reflect on and respond to the reflections of our local Diocesan Church.

The Plenary Council Facilitation Team would also like to receive your responses. The attached process provides the opportunity for individuals and groups to make your submissions to them to.

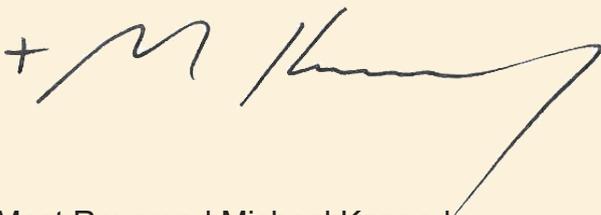
Following are some additional questions I invite you to reflect on which may assist you to answer the greater question of what God is asking of us as a Church at this time in Australia.

## Some Questions To Think About:

1. The family, the parish, and the school have been the three main places of evangelical energy of the Church in Australia. What are the hallmarks of this evangelical energy? Going forward, what are our aspirations for family, parish, and school, and how can we best renew and support them into the future?
2. The Church, as Pope Benedict said, is about a person: Jesus Christ and our relationship with him. How do we keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ to ensure the Church inspires and serves the world rather than become fixated on the world? How do we effectively engage in: praying and worshipping God; passing on the faith; supporting human life and human lives; and living our Catholic moral teaching?
3. Australia has a long and proud history of collaboration between bishops, priests, religious, and laypeople. How do we continue this tradition into the future without taking anything from the uniqueness and beauty of each particular state of life?
4. Often in our two thousand year history the Church has been persecuted or humiliated in numerous ways and has even seemed close to dying. The present-day Church in Australia has certainly been humiliated and some would say even persecuted in some ways. How do we build resilience and hope in the hearts of the faithful and rebuild the Church's credibility in our society? How can each of us be proud and unashamedly Catholic; an active participant in Parish life; and a public witness to Jesus Christ and our faith in Him?

Please take some time to reflect on what God is asking of us. I look forward to receiving your thoughts and ideas.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by a stylized name that appears to be 'Michael Kennedy'.

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy  
Bishop of Armidale

Send submissions to: [plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au](mailto:plenarysubmissions@armidale.catholic.org.au)  
and also at: <http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/have-your-say/>