



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

(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 Lenten Period for the Plenary Council

In this time of Purification & Enlightenment, 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, *what God is asking of Australia at this time*. 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 Intercessions for the Elect from the RCIA Text [RCIA #121b]

You may prefer using intercessions relating to the Scrutinies if timely appropriate. [RCIA #140, 154, 161]

**R. We pray that we may find joy in daily prayer;
All. Lord, hear our prayer**

**R. We ask that by praying to You often, we may grow ever closer to You.
All. Lord, hear our prayer**

**R. We pray that as we reflect in this gathering, that we joyfully dwell on this in our hearts.
All. Lord, hear our prayer**

**R. We pray that we may humbly acknowledge our faults and work wholeheartedly to correct them.
All. Lord, hear our prayer**

**R. We ask You to accept our dedication to our daily work as a pleasing offering to You.
All. Lord, hear our prayer**

2 Read Question & Support Material

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

God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking His mercy...time and time again He bears us on His shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. [EV3]

Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. The Lord gets involved and He involves His own as He kneels to wash their feet... 'You will be blessed if you do this.' [EV 24; Jn 13:17]

'The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself, ponder the mystery of her own being...' [EV 26; Eph 5:27]

'Thou shalt not kill' sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say 'thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality. [EV 53]

With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that 'where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more'. Our faith is challenged to discern how wine can come from water and how wheat can grow in the midst of weeds. [EV 84; Rom 5:20]

The salvation which God offers us is the work of His mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. He sends his Spirit into our hearts...transforming us enabling us to respond to His love by our lives. [EV112]

The Gospel message always begins with a greeting of peace,...but if we look more closely,...the locus of this reconciliation of differences is within ourselves, in our own lives, ever threatened...If hearts are shattered in thousands of pieces, it is not easy to create authentic peace in society. [EV 229]

We do not always see these seeds growing, we need interior certainty, a conviction that God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks...We may be sure that none of our acts of love for God will be lost...all of these encircle our world like a vital force... It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. [EV 279]

Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give Him everything, allowing Him to make our efforts bear fruit in His good time. [EV279]

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

We are not asked to be flawless, but to keep growing and wanting to grow as we advance along the path of the Gospel; our arms must never grow slack. Jesus Christ has saved and that His love always has the last word. [EV151]

The kingdom, already present and growing in our midst, engages us at every level of our being and reminds us of the principle of discernment...applied to true development...the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of our concrete life, both personal and social. [EV181; *Populorum Progressio* 264]

The word solidarity is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriate of goods by a few. [EV10]

Seeing their poverty, hearing their cries and knowing their sufferings, we are scandalized because we know that there is enough food for everyone... made worse by the generalised practice of wastefulness. [EV191; Conf. of Bishops of Brazil 2]

Sometimes we prove hard of heart and mind; we are forgetful, distracted and carried away by the limitless possibilities for consumption...offered by contemporary society...production and consumption make it more difficult to offer the gift of self and to establish solidarity between people. [EV 196]

God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that He Himself became poor. [EV 197; 2 Cor 8:9]

Peace...demands the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under...transient peace for a contented minority...When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised. [EV 218]



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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

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