



In 2020, there will be a Plenary Council about the future of the Catholic Church in Australia

What is a Plenary Council?

A Plenary Council is the highest formal gathering of all local churches in a country. A Plenary Council, or Synod, can discuss and legislate on a wide range of issues, including matters of faith, morals and discipline. It is also a wonderful opportunity to engage people in conversations about God and the Church. The last time a plenary council was held in Australia was in 1937 and prior to that in 1885, 1895 and 1905.

Why are we having a Plenary Council in Australia?

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has identified that:

“The circumstances of the Church in Australia in our time, including the patterns of change that are evident within the community of the Church, the issues confronting the Church in modern multicultural and secular Australia, the increase in entrusting responsibility for and leadership of the Church’s mission to laity, and even the changing face of the Episcopate, prompt the Church to review, analyse, and discern the signs of the times, to listen anew to the Spirit, and to chart its course into the future.”

When will the Plenary Council take place?

Preparation for the Plenary Council will take place over a period of three years. The Plenary Council will be celebrated in 2020 across two sessions, in October 2020 and May 2021. The national timeline is as follows:

- *Until Ash Wednesday 2019:* A “Year of Listening” (local listening and dialogue sessions, and data compilation at the national office)
- *2019:* A “Year of Discerning” (summary reports from 2019 written up as an agenda for 2020)
- *2020:* A “Year of Proposing” (two Plenary Council sessions, Oct 2020 and May 2021, at which proposals will be voting on proposed legislation)

Who can be part of the Plenary Council process?

Who can participate in the listening and dialogue sessions?

All Catholics are invited to be part of the process – to participate in local ‘listening and dialogue’ sessions – that leads to the two Plenary Council sessions.

Every community in every parish, Catholic primary and secondary schools, Catholic agencies, religious institutes and ecclesial movements are invited to participate.

In addition, where possible we are encouraged to reach out to as many people in the Catholic community as possible to enable all to offer a response to the Plenary question: “*What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?*”

Who will attend the two Plenary Council sessions?

All Australian bishops must attend and it is expected that there will also be a presence of lay people, priests and religious.

Further information about the Plenary Council is available online

National Plenary Office: plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au

Archdiocese of Melbourne: www.cam.org.au/plenary

What is happening at St Mary of the Angels Parish, Geelong?

The parish will be offering four opportunities in December 2018 to contribute to the Plenary in a small-group setting.

The responses each small group produces will be supplied to the National Plenary Office and also collated and provided to the whole parish community in early 2019.

The sessions will be held at both 11 am and 7 pm on the following days:

Wednesday, 12th December, and Thursday, 20th December,
in the Pioneer Room, St Mary’s Office Centre, 150 Yarra Street, Geelong.

To assist in preparation, please register for a session (or sessions) using the sign-up sheets in the St Mary’s Basilica narthex or by notifying the parish office on (03) 5222 1977, or via email AnnaMarieD@stmarysgeelong.com.au

Updates will be posted on the parish website at:

www.stmarysgeelong.com.au/plenary_council.html