



First Sunday of Lent

**Called to be a Christ-Centred Church that
is Prayerful and Eucharistic**



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

Introduction

This Lenten Program draws on the rich Scripture texts of this Year A Lenten Season, and invites us to reflect on these in conjunction with the Plenary Council 2020 themes, to discern what the Spirit is saying to us in our own local parish communities today.

The plenary theme that we will reflect on in this first week, **Prayerful and Eucharistic**, is especially suitable to begin our Lenten journey.

Our discernment should always be grounded in authentic and honest prayer therefore this week we not only 'reflect' on prayer, we begin by 'practicing' prayer. We should do all we can to flood this 6-week series of gatherings in prayer, including our own personal reflections, our conversations with others, and our desire for our parish. We acknowledge that our prayer is two-way, not a monologue but a dialogue, where we speak to God, and God also speaks to us. We trust that our prayer is heard by our loving God, and that God accompanies us in this journey at every step of the way.

This session reflects particularly on prayer and the celebration of the Liturgy and Sacraments, a very rich and significant aspect of our shared parish life.

Many blessings in your reflection.

Let's Gather and Pray Together (5 mins)



Gathering

Sit silently for a moment and come into God's presence. Know in confidence that Jesus is present when we gather in his name.

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.

Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary MacKillop, pray for us.



This Week's Theme: Prayerful and Eucharistic (5 mins)



Below is a short overview paragraph of this theme which arose from the first phase of the Plenary Council process, Phase 1: Listening & Dialogue. Read this quietly now to give context to our gathering. What are you drawn to? What thoughts or images are arising for you? You may wish to underline words or phrases.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who shared how deeply they treasured the Eucharist and the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. There was a call for stronger and more engaging preaching, with an emphasis on the Word of God and connection to daily life, some seeking a uniquely Australian expression of prayer and Eucharistic celebration, drawing from the wisdom and rituals of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and also bringing together the many migrant communities which make up the Church in Australia. There were many divergent expressions of ways in which people and communities encounter God through their experiences of prayer, music and liturgy, and a desire for catechesis, training and formation for those in ministries related to these.

Excerpt from Snapshot Report – How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is: Prayerful and Eucharistic.

The full Snapshot Report is available online at <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/reports/#snapshotreports>

Let's Reflect (5 mins)



We now turn to this week's Scripture passage, the Gospel for the First Week of Lent from Matthew Chapter 4 - The temptation of Jesus in the desert.

Read Gospel passage twice

1. One person from the group reads the Scripture passage aloud.
2. After 2 minutes of silence, a second person from the group reads the Scripture passage aloud again.

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." '

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '
Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." '
Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Individual Silent Reflection (20 mins)



Take time now to reflect individually in silence, pray with the scripture passage you have heard, and reflect on the information about the National Theme for Discernment “Prayerful and Eucharistic”. Some initial thoughts are offered below.

During this time of silence, consider the questions below. You may wish to journal, to draw or simply sit quietly with your thoughts.

- **How is God speaking to you in this scripture and all that you have read?**
- **What words or phrases are you being drawn to and why?**
- **How do you feel?**

Some Initial Thoughts



In today's passage, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, where he is tested, and ultimately overcomes this testing and temptation.

It is in this desert place that Jesus himself faces his own struggles and discerns and clarifies his own mission. He enters a time of real silence, of no distraction, of total surrender. He emerges with great clarity of purpose and begins his public ministry with confidence.

Similarly, our time today is a desert-like place where we carve out time to be with God in quiet and reflection. We pray for guidance and courage in our communal discernment, and the same clarity of mission that Jesus also found in knowing God's will.

As we reflect on a Prayerful and Eucharistic Church, we draw on Jesus' example in this text of prayerfulness and unflinching trust in his heavenly Father. Jesus knew the Scriptures well and applied them in the situations he found himself in. We are reminded of the everlasting nature of God's word, that speaks in all times. Indeed, the Scriptures are a privileged place to meet and listen to God. Just as God's word took on human flesh in Jesus, so God's word takes on human words in our sacred Scriptures.

We also draw on images of both 'bread' and 'word', images that are key in our sacramental rites. Our sacred, communal Liturgies (the Mass, as well as other Liturgies) deserve our special attention, where we gather together to pray, give thanks, praise and worship. These are times when God's grace can flow into our lives in extraordinary ways. Let's pray especially for guidance in how God is inviting us to worship God more joyfully, wholeheartedly and authentically in our local communities.

Sharing & Listening – Round 1 (15 mins)



Each person in the group is invited to share aloud the fruits of your individual prayer and to say how you are feeling using the lead-in statements below (2-3 minutes each).

Take care to allow everyone in the group to respond as and when they are ready; and keep in mind, that when others are speaking, to listen with an open and humble heart.

**“In my prayer today...
And I feel...”**

Reflect (5 mins)

Once everybody has shared, the whole group reflects in silence for 5 minutes. During this time, think about what you have heard the people in your group say, and ask yourself: “What am I hearing the Holy Spirit saying to us?”



Sharing & Listening - Round 2 (15 mins)



Each person is invited to share with the group from their reflection (approx. 2 minutes each). What have you heard the Spirit saying in the voices of the group? Use the lead-in statements below.

This time when sharing, do not add anything new to the conversation – just your response to what you have heard already shared.

“Listening to the Holy Spirit through the voices of this group, I have heard...”

“And it leaves me feeling...”

Reflect (5 mins)

Once everybody has shared, the whole group reflects in silence for 5 minutes. During this time, think about how you are feeling and about your experience of prayer and listening today.

Sharing & Listening - Round 3 (10 mins)



This third round of sharing and listening is open, and less structured than the previous two rounds. The purpose of open conversation is to deepen your encounter with one another. Any person who wants to speak is invited to share. During this time, remember to listen deeply when someone else is speaking, and to respond to the conversation with an open and kind heart.

In light of all you have experienced today, share your thoughts and feelings with the group. When sharing, you might like to begin with these words:

“From our prayer and conversation today, and thinking about how God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is Prayerful and Eucharistic ...”

When the time is right, close the conversation by saying thank you to one another for sharing before taking a short break. Remember to note the time to get back together after the break.

Coffee break (10 mins)

Thinking Locally – Individual Silent Reflection (5 mins)



Take some time now, to reflect on any ideas which might be acted upon locally, in your own lives, in parishes, communities or schools or in other parts of your local neighbourhood. Think about who you can collaborate with locally. This part is your call to faith in action, living out the Gospel for God's mission.

The whole group reflects in silence for 5 minutes. During this time, think about the concrete, practical steps which could be taken to move your community forward to be more Prayerful and Eucharistic. You may wish to use Post-It notes to record ideas.

What ideas do we have that can nourish our local faith community?

Thinking Locally – Sharing and Listening Whole Group (15 mins)

Everyone is invited to share their ideas with the group. If you have used Post-It notes, place these in the centre of the group as you speak about them. When others are sharing their ideas, remember to listen with an open and humble heart.

Once everyone has shared their ideas for action, your group's task is to identify 2 or 3 emerging actions that can form the group's submission to your Parish or Community leaders.

Below are some questions to guide your group's discernment:

- **What actions do we feel strongly called towards?**
- **What actions could really help us to move toward becoming a Christ-centred Church that is Prayerful and Eucharistic?**
- **What is the most loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?**

Give Thanks



Let us conclude in prayer:

Gracious God,
Through our experience of discernment,
you invited each of us
to hear the Holy Spirit in the voices of others,
to challenge our own will, desires, fears and
prejudices and to be open to your will.

Lord Jesus, thank you for guiding us
as our beacon of light, truth and life
so that we can clearly see how best to
honour and serve you, our neighbours
and our true selves.

We pray that our decisions today
have stayed true to you
and to the faith and trust
that you have in us.

Through this experience,
may the Holy Spirit ignite
feelings of joy, and deeper faith,
greater hope and trust,
greater love and peace,
greater courage and compassion
in each of us and in your holy Church
as we journey forward together.
Amen.

Prepared by the Catholic Life & Faith Formation team, Office for Evangelisation, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay.
The Office for Evangelisation is available to assist parishes with parish planning and parish renewal initiatives.
Please contact evangelisation@bbcatholic.org.au

