



Second Sunday of Lent

**Called to be a Christ-Centred Church that
is Missionary and Evangelising**



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 this week, **Missionary and Evangelising**, gets to the heart of our identity and purpose as parish and Church. Our Church is missionary in nature. It exists to evangelise and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ; to make Jesus known and loved, and to continue his work of building up the Kingdom of God.

Being 'missionary' means being 'sent'. We realise that God has always been 'one who sends', coming to meet us through the sending of Jesus, and in turn, remaining with us through the sending of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be sent ourselves so that we, too, go where the Gospel needs to be proclaimed. God's work in the world depends on this.

To 'evangelise' simply means to share the Good News of Jesus that we deeply treasure as his disciples: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you." (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 164)

This session, we are challenged to reflect on how we are proclaiming this message today in our parishes and local communities, and how we can effectively engage a society that greatly needs to hear it.

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: Missionary and Evangelising (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 a passion for participating in the missionary nature of the Church and desire stronger support, involvement and formation among all the baptised who make up the Church. The data also identified the need to reach out and communicate more effectively and to find new ways of living and proclaiming the Gospel in Australia today. There was a call for the strengthening of leadership and ministries in parishes and schools, training to equip leaders for ministry, pastoral support for various groups within parish and faith communities, and a desire for a unified voice in engaging social issues such as life and religious freedom.

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

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 Second Week of Lent from Matthew Chapter 17 - The Transfiguration.

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 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

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 “Missionary and Evangelising”. 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



Whereas last week we saw Jesus at his most human in the midst of temptation, in today’s passage we have a glimpse of his divinity.

The disciples have a moment of clarity in which they see Jesus as who he really is – the beloved Son of God. Jesus was not just a good rabbi or an itinerant miracle worker. He wasn’t just a good teacher and an example to follow if we want to live a good life.

Jesus is truly God, as we proclaim in the Nicene Creed:

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

How many people, when looking at Jesus, see the good teacher but not the divine Son? This amazing news needs to be told and retold. Now that Jesus has been raised from the dead, we, his faithful disciples, are commissioned to tell everyone! Jesus’ last words in the Gospel of Matthew give us this mandate to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”.

As we reflect on what it means to be a missionary and evangelising parish, we pray for boldness and creativity in the way we present the Gospel both within and outside our parish communities. We will need new courage, just like the first disciples, to be witnesses to Jesus. Just as they had to leave the comfort of a powerful mountain-top experience and head back down to their ordinary lives, we too need to take the Gospel to our own neighbours. This work may need us to be equipped with skills which will be new to us; and it will definitely need a strengthened reliance on the Holy Spirit.

We also pray for a new revelation in the hearts of people, to be open to be able to receive the message of Jesus and to recognise him as who he truly is, so that this understanding can change their lives.

Pope Francis, in a recent document, said about Christians, “Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19). Let’s take on this mission with courage.



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 Missionary and Evangelising ...”

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 Missionary and Evangelising. 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 Missionary and Evangelising?**
- **What is the most loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?**

Give Thanks



Let us conclude in prayer:

Heavenly Father,
when your only begotten Son Jesus Christ
rose from the dead,
he commissioned his followers
to "go and make disciples of all nations"
and you remind us that through our Baptism
we are made sharers in the mission of the Church.

Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit
to be courageous and zealous
in bearing witness to the Gospel,
so that the mission entrusted to the Church,
which is still very far from completion,
may find new and efficacious expressions
that bring life and light to the world.

Help us make it possible for all peoples
to experience the saving love
and mercy of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.
Amen.

Prayer For The Extraordinary Mission Month, October 2019

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.
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