



Sixth Sunday of Lent – Passion Sunday

**Called to be a Christ-Centred Church that is
a Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community**



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 is **A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community**.

As we immerse ourselves into the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and walk with him through the Cross and to the Resurrection, we see that through serving and self-emptying comes hope and joy.

We have such a great message that we hold as a Christian community that remembers and celebrates the story of Jesus. The hope and joy that we carry within the heart of our parishes and Church is for everyone. Those looking from the outside may not clearly see this hope and joy. We may even need to rekindle it amongst ourselves first so that we can better witness to it. This is our task and the main role of our parishes, to witness to the life-giving joy of Jesus and bring people into an experience of this joy for themselves.

A key way that we share this hope and joy with our wider communities is through acts of loving service to all our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable. To be Christ-like is to give of ourselves for others. So many in our communities embrace this call daily. Let's seek ways to be more effective in our outreach so that our Christian hope and joy, and the fruits of the Resurrection, can be more widespread and accessible to every person.

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: A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community (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 expressed a yearning for the Church to be a sign of God's kingdom for all people in Australia – to be able to see the Catholic Church in action, and to recognise Jesus. There was an expression of faith-filled hope in the capacity of the Catholic community to celebrate together, to show what it is to be a follower of Christ and to be loved unconditionally by God. There was a call to contemplate the Gospel call to be a servant Church for the good of all people in Australia – particularly for refugees and asylum-seekers and other people who are vulnerable or at risk. Many responses called for greater sharing of the story of the good works done by so many people and organisations of the Church. Some responses expressed a hunger for strong witness of faith, especially by priests, young people and female leaders in parish and school ministries.

Excerpt from Snapshot Report – How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is: A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community.

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 Second Reading for the Sixth Week of Lent from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians Chapter 2 – a wonderful confession of faith from our early Christian tradition.

Read the Scripture 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.

Philippians 2:6-11

Though he was in the form of God,
he did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

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 “A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community”. 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



The Gospel for Passion Sunday is the Passion narrative from Matthew’s Gospel, commencing with the betrayal by Judas Iscariot and concluding with the burial of Jesus.

The 2nd reading from Philippians on which we base our reflection in this session, also speaks of the death of Jesus, but continues to profess his exaltation to his glory. Death and new life go hand-in-hand in Christianity.

Jesus humbly took on our humanity, and gave of himself completely to the service of others, leading to the ultimate self-giving in his death. He gives us a model of self-sacrificial love that defined his whole life. Every self-giving act that gives love to another in some way participates in this great story of Jesus. Something in us dies so that something in the other can be born to give them life more fully.

Within our parishes, it is our self-giving that brings hope and new life to people. Indeed, many people in our parishes give of themselves tirelessly in a great many ways and through many ministries. We should celebrate these stories in our communities. There is so much good that is being done in our parishes that reflects the life of God, where people meet and serve others in their need; or where people are coming to know the story and love of Jesus through us that makes a difference to their lives. Our mission, after all, is that everyone can come and know the hope and joy offered at Easter.

This session may be a good opportunity to re-consider the needs in our local community, and where we might be called right now to go out in service to bring God’s love to the most vulnerable.

As we reflect on what it means to be a Church that is A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community, let’s celebrate enthusiastically the Easter Good News in Christ that we share, and take this message out in service of others to bring them hope and joy.

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 A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community..."

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 A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community. 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 A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community?**
- **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.

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