



Lenten Listening 2020

A Lenten resource to facilitate local discernment
on the six Plenary Council 2020 Themes, in conjunction
with the Lenten Year A Scripture texts.



PlenaryCouncil2020
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

Lenten Listening 2020

About this Resource

A Lenten resource to facilitate local discernment on the six Plenary Council 2020 Themes, in conjunction with the Lenten Year A Scripture texts.

As we journey together towards the Plenary Council sessions in 2020 and 2021, all Australians are invited to contribute through listening and discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying to us here and now.

This Lenten program experience draws on the rich Scripture texts of this Year A Lenten Season, and invites us to reflect on these in conjunction with the Plenary themes, to discern what the Spirit is saying to us **in our own local communities** today. The focus, therefore, moves from a national conversation to a local community conversation, whether it be our parish, school or other ecclesial community group.

This will be a process of communal discernment, rather than individual discernment. The process you will engage with is a process of prayer, contemplation, sharing with one another and seeking God's direction, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Each week will look at one of the 6 themes arising from the Plenary Council, and follow the discernment process, as outlined in the Plenary Council Phase 2 Listening and Discernment guide, "Let's Listen & Discern."

The themes are as follows:

Week 1: Prayerful and Eucharistic

Week 2: Missionary and Evangelising

Week 3: Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal

Week 4: Humble, Healing and Merciful

Week 5: Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform

Week 6: A Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community

Each session lasts 2 hours.

This is a privileged time to spend with each other in our faith family. Let's be honest, open, and respectful, bringing a listening heart to our conversations.

There is also a practical dimension to our gathering. At the conclusion of each session, you are invited to offer the fruits of your reflection, with regard to possible actions to be progressed to your Parish Priest or school or community leaders, for continued discernment within the whole community.

May this time of reflection be a fruitful one at this significant time in the life of our Australian Church.

Preparing to Discern

This Lenten journey is a little different to others that you may have previously undertaken.

These 6 sessions of reflection are founded on the 6 themes that have arisen from the Plenary Council Listening Sessions as areas where the people in Australia believe that God is inviting us to move towards.

We will also draw on the Scripture texts from the Lenten Readings to allow God to speak through God's Word into our hearts and our communities. God's word in sacred Scripture is a powerful means to engage with what God



wishes to speak today. Pope Francis reminds us to receive the Scriptures “not as a human word but as what it really is, the word of God”. They are not just empty words. It is the Holy Spirit that “makes human words written in human fashion become the word of God”. When we read the Scriptures, we are entering into a true dialogue, a true encounter, a participation in the great story of salvation. As well as speaking to us personally, the Scriptures speak to us communally, “for we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers.” (*Quotes from Aperuit Illis*)

Combined together with the Plenary Themes, we seek to allow God to speak to our time and place in our local communities in Australia today.

As we enter a process of discernment, it is important to understanding what discernment is, and what it is not.

God’s Will, Not Mine

The first point that is essential to understand is that discernment involves trying to discover God’s will, and not ours. This involves an attitude of surrender, of being open and expectant to what God wants to reveal. We do not come with a pre-conceived idea of what the result will be. We let it unfold. We come with a desire to do God’s will, as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “thy will be done”. Do we truly desire this? If we do, then we will more likely be able to do so.

We may find it presumptuous to even think that we can know the mind of God. So how can we really know this?

Sensus fidelium

As a starting point, we should understand the term ‘sensus fidelium’. The faithful, as a whole, do have a capacity to listen and discern:

One of Pope Francis’ favourite quotes from Vatican II (Lumen Gentium, 12) concerns how the bishops have access to the Holy Spirit, so that they are faithfully interpreting and applying what God has revealed and is revealing. And that access comes through a special gift that all the baptised have received at their baptism when they are anointed with chrism. That gift is called “a sense for the faith” (sensus fidei). Moreover, the whole church together has this special gift, what is called “the faithful’s sense of the faith” (sensus fidelium).

Through this, Vatican II teaches, the Church is “infallible in believing”. So, this “sense of the faithful” is a sacred conduit for finding out what God is asking of us in Australia at this present time. The bishops’ role of “oversight” is to ensure that contemporary interpretations of divine revelation are faithful to the past. But, equally importantly, to ensure that God’s present activity in human history is being attended to. This is done by attending and interpreting to the signs of the times and listening to the faithful.

<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/pages/about-us/theology/>

In relationship with Jesus

On a personal note, the answer to the above question becomes clearer the more we are in relationship with Jesus. The more we know Jesus, love Jesus and are used to communicating with Jesus through prayer and listening through Scripture, people, and the circumstances in our lives, the more we will be on the same page as Jesus and get a better sense of what he is asking. Through our relationship with him, Jesus continues to reveal his love for us. This is the basis for our discernment.

Each theme clearly puts Christ at the centre – we are called to be a Christ-centred Church. Let’s keep this at the forefront of our gathering. Christ is present when we gather, as we listen to what God is asking of us through the Holy Spirit.

Founded in Prayer

Founding this whole exercise in prayer is crucial. It is prayer and the Holy Spirit that will guide us. Ensure that your prayer is real, heartfelt and authentic.

Learning to Listen

Learning to listen is also important. Listening involves firstly creating a quiet space free of noise and distraction. Sometimes we need to remove this noise just in order to be able to listen to ourselves!

Learning to listen to God is also something we need to grow into – to differentiate God’s gentle voice amongst other internal voices.

We also try to remove our own internal buzz to be able to really listen to the other and to God. Deep and intentional listening to others in our group is a great gift that we can give them and is essential in a communal exercise such as this. Any conclusion arrived at should be as a result of deep listening, both to God speaking within yourself, and to the others in the group.

Communal Discernment

Indeed, this discernment we are undertaking is not a personal one, but a communal discernment. We need to keep this at the forefront of our ponderings. We are listening to the Spirit speaking to us as a group, and to guide us forward however God wishes.

Leading to Action

Discernment ultimately requires action, a decision to move and to act. At some point we need to decide what to do with what we have discerned. There can be some concern as to whether we have chosen the right path. However, we must trust that Jesus is accompanying us on this path. We do the best we can, and God meets us there. We can take a first step and continue to discern and seek guidance as we go along.

Empowered to Respond

If God is calling us to do something and puts a mission in our heart, God always gives us the grace to do it. If we think we can’t possibly take it on, we are invited to let go of our fear and to trust in God. God has a God-sized vision for our communities, and we are invited to co-operate with God’s work. It is God’s work, not just ours.

When we have made a decision, a usual sign that confirms it is from God is an experience of peacefulness and ‘rightness’ about the decision. For example, when Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, he came to a sense of peace where he was able to say, “Not my will, but your will be done”. The rich young man, on the other hand, felt sadness after making his own decision. Our feelings about a decision can be a guide.

References:

Resources on Discernment (videos and articles)
<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/introduction-to-discernment/>
Discernment for Dummies Animated Series by Fr Dave Callaghan MGL
<http://mglpriestsandbrothers.org/animated-spirituality/>

Prepared by the Catholic Life & Faith Formation team, Office for Evangelisation, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay.

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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





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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Third Sunday of Lent

**Called to be a Christ-Centred Church that
is Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal**



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 **Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal**.

Inclusivity implies that all have a place, and that all are welcome. In today's Church, belonging, hospitality and welcome are key considerations, firmly grounded in Biblical teaching. Whether a newcomer to the parish returns will be based on a large part on the welcome and sense of belonging they have received. Our Catholic worship, for example, often seems to favour the personal and private, and yet it is a communal celebration. A friendly 'hello' and simple smile can be the difference for an individual between an isolating experience of the Mass and a warm one.

Greater participation of lay people within our parish communities is an area that has been strengthened since the Second Vatican Council. We have grown in the understanding that all the Baptised have each received gifts from the Holy Spirit that they are called to use to help build up the Kingdom of God. Further that this, the laity are called to exercise 'co-responsibility'. Pope Benedict says,

"Co-responsibility requires a change in mentality, particularly with regard to the role of the laity in the Church, who should be considered not as "collaborators" with the clergy, but as persons truly "co-responsible" for the being and activity of the Church. It is important, therefore, that a mature and committed laity be united, who are able to make their own specific contribution to the Church's mission."
Message on the Occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action (10 August 2012)

However, often we don't have processes or models of leadership in place to allow parishioner's gifts and responsibilities to be identified, nurtured, and enabled within our communities to the benefit of all.

Finally, being 'synodal' means being a listening Church, where there are opportunities at all levels of Church to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit. Your presence in this group today, and your participation in this wider parish conversation, is already a move towards greater inclusivity, participation and synodality.

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: Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal (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 desire for individuals and groups within and also beyond the Church to find a better welcome and be incorporated more into her life and mission. There was a call to renew forms of governance and leadership in the Church, to find ways formally and informally of being co-responsible for ministry and mission, seeking structures and processes of collaboration, shared decision-making and financial co-responsibility in order to enable this greater involvement of lay people particularly of women, young people, people of diverse cultural backgrounds and people with disabilities. There was an expressed need for stronger connections across the many parts of the Church, and with other Christian traditions.

Excerpt from Snapshot Report – How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is: Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal.

*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 Third Week of Lent from John Chapter 4
- The Woman at the Well.

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.

John 4:5-42

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him,

and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.'

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.'

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 "Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal". 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 Biblical times, Jews and Samaritans were not close friends; and neither was it culturally appropriate for a man to greet a woman in public.

Seen in this light, Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in this week's Gospel crosses quite a few barriers. As in every encounter that Jesus had with another, he always saw the 'person' first, and he was always aware of their needs. Even though he asked the woman for water, he knew it was she who needed life-giving water.

This meeting speaks of Jesus' passionate inclusivity – always ready to welcome each and every person and calling them to be transformed in God's life-changing love.

This chance meeting at a well was, strikingly, one of the few occasions where Jesus actually stated who he is, not to a religious leader, but to a Samaritan woman. "I am he." Jesus is the Messiah.

This revelation generates such excitement in the woman, that she is compelled to invite the townspeople, which would include family, friends and neighbours, to come and also experience what she has discovered. This unlikely evangelist takes up her place in bringing the Good News, in sharing in the work of the Kingdom. She does this immediately, with little preparation, and with great zeal. Her ministry was not a laborious task. Rather, after encountering Jesus, she is sharing her joy.

And surprisingly, many do come, leading to their own transformation. This is a message open to every person, a message that can't be contained.

As we reflect on what it means to be an inclusive, participatory and synodal Church, we pray for a renewed invitational, welcoming and inclusive spirit amongst all our people, and for greater opportunities for every person to be involved and active in sharing their gifts so that our parishes can fulfil their purpose as bearers of the Good News to all people.

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 Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal...”

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 Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal. 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 and 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 Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal?**
- **What is the most loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?**



Give Thanks



Let us conclude in prayer:

Loving God, author of all gifts;

We praise and thank you for all the gifts you have entrusted to us.

Pour out your Spirit upon us so that, true to our baptismal promises, we may form faith communities that recognise and promote the gifts in all people so that we may all share in the mission of Jesus.

Inspire us to be a Church that is welcoming and accepting, and which sees everyone as an expression of Christ.

May our faith communities nurture and commission all members to live our particular gifts as a reflection and imitation of Jesus' life.

Give us the courage to be the light of welcome in the darkness of exclusion, a voice of gentleness in the wilderness of the unheard and an outstretched hand of love to those longing for community. Amen.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2013

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Fourth Sunday of Lent

**Called to be a Christ-Centred Church that
is Humble, Healing and Merciful**



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 **Humble, Healing and Merciful**. The feeling of needing to lament is a very biblical response in times of crisis and is at the same time a feeling in the hearts of many in the Church today.

We cry out in grief at the brokenness we see in the Church, in the world, and sometimes in ourselves. There is indeed much to lament, and yet, within the biblical Psalms, wherever deep lament is expressed, there often follows a glimmer of hope in the promise of God. This one verse in Psalm 42 (v.11) captures this well:

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

There is a trust that healing will come, that God is bigger than the troubles and the distress. We are invited to take this trust into our prayer for healing in the Church today, in all the areas of brokenness and division. This applies both at a communal level, and at a personal one.

Pope Francis is always keen to remind us of God's abundant mercy. Indeed, the word 'mercy' has come to define his pontificate. Ours is a God who is forever calling us back into God's loving embrace and desiring to shower us with grace. Our God is a God who seeks our wellbeing and healing.

Lent is a time to move towards accepting this grace and healing. When we turn to God in acknowledgement of our brokenness, we allow God, who is ever ready to meet us where we are at, to enter and begin the healing process. This is the great gift that all Christians are encouraged to share with the world – the abundant mercy of God for every person.

In our Pope's words, 'Let the Church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven.'

This session reflects particularly on the topics of healing from the abuse crisis; better relationships within the Church and with the wider society; and ways to reach out to bring healing and mercy to all.

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: Humble, Healing and Merciful (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 deep and faith-filled trust in God and a need for lament and healing within the Church, acknowledging the sexual abuse crisis as a turning point for the Church in Australia. It identified the need for relationship and reconciliation among many within the Catholic community, and with the wider Australian society, particularly with Australia's First Peoples and with all of creation. A desire was expressed for stronger prayer and sacramental life and more effective outreach to those who seek healing, as a renewed openness to and sign of God's mercy.

*Excerpt from Snapshot Report – How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is:
Humble, Healing and Merciful.*

*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 Fourth Week of Lent from John Chapter 9
– The Man Born Blind.

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.

John 9:1-41

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud

on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.'

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 "Humble, Healing and Merciful". 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



This passage recounts the marvellous healing of a man born blind, and the desire of Jesus to meet him, take time to work with him, and ultimately bring him healing. Jesus doesn't just pass the man by but, instead, stops to tend to his need. At the end of the passage, knowing that the man was being chastised for his belief in him, Jesus intentionally searches him out, like a shepherd looking for his lost sheep. Jesus' heart was always for the outcast, the forgotten, and the smallest among them.

This desire to bring healing is clear throughout the life of Jesus, and reflects our loving God who desires our wholeness and flourishing. This Good News of a loving and merciful God is a great gift to be shared, as every person needs healing in some way, whether physical or spiritual.

How can we bring this healing heart to our communities, and be instruments of God's healing grace? We may look at how we can be more aware of people's needs in our community, and how to seek out those who experience brokenness in so many ways. We may look at our responses to these needs and what we could offer. We notice that Jesus' response in this passage is substantial, with practical action and follow-up. His accompaniment of the man over a period of time is a good model for us.

Another aspect in this passage is the division within the community. There was an inability by some to hear the truth of the blind man's words and the blessing present there. It reminds us to reflect on whether we listen to all the voices within our community; and where there may be places of disunity or discord which need attention at this time.

As we reflect on what it means to be a humble, healing and merciful Church, we pray that God's grace and healing will flow through our parishes and Church to restore and to transform, both communally and individually; and for the humility to listen deeply to each other as we journey together.

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 Humble, Healing and Merciful...”

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 Humble, Healing and Merciful. 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 Humble, Healing and Merciful?**
- **What is the most loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?**



Give Thanks



Let us conclude in prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the
heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew
from being enslaved by money;
the Magdalene from seeking happiness
only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,
the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:
“If you knew the gift of God!”
You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all by
forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its
Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers would also be
clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion for those
in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them feel sought
after, loved, and forgiven by God.
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us
with its anointing,
so that your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may
bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.
We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession
of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee (adapted)

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



Fifth Sunday of Lent

**Called to be a Christ-Centred Church
that is Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform**



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 **Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform**. You may be familiar with the following quote from Pope Francis from November 2015 to the Italian Church, "Today we are not living an era of change, but a change of era."

With continual and extensive change unfolding in society, the Church must seek ways to be able to speak the unchanging Good News of Jesus Christ in fresh and relevant ways so that it can be received meaningfully by those who hear it. A 'business as usual' approach is failing us right now.

Pope Francis speaks of a "creative fidelity", of being faithful to the Gospel but also open to the perennial newness of the Gospel. He speaks of the Church as "being implanted and rooted in Christ, allowing herself to be led by the Spirit. Thus everything will be possible with genius and creativity." We should not be afraid of the challenges ahead, but tackle them head on, founded in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Change can be both personal and communal – personally, seeking conversion and turning back to God more faithfully; and communally, seeking renewal in the way we do things and considering reform in our structures, governance and processes that assist us in our mission.

This is where 'discernment' is called for – to guide us in the way forward where it is not always clear how to respond, or which is the best step to take. Let's go forward in confidence in our loving God and open to where the journey will lead us.

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: Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform (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 desire to do things differently in response to Christ and the experience of our people, accepting that faithfulness to tradition requires change that is both personal and communal. Respondents also affirmed the important role of the clergy, expressing their appreciation for their vocation and recognising the need for support and ongoing formation and accompaniment. Some asked for a consideration of alternative approaches to ordained ministry, some for a greater inclusion of laity and different groups in the Church's life, some for new models of governance and leadership, and some for a renewed fidelity to the Church's teachings. There was also a call for a renewed life of prayer and communion with one another, including understanding the many different ways in which we encounter God and experience a conversion of heart.

*Excerpt from Snapshot Report – How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is:
Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform.*

*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 Fifth Week of Lent from John Chapter 11 – The Raising of Lazarus.

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.

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of

this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in 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 "Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform". 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 this passage we see revealed by Jesus the heart of our great story as Christians, that life has overcome death, and that no matter how difficult things become, our God can act to bring something new out of the darkness. This is God's work - to restore, to show mercy, to forgive, to care for, to draw people into loving relationship, to heal, to bring wholeness, to give new life. In short, God wants to build God's Kingdom, just as Jesus showed us in person.

Remembering that it is God's work and not only ours gives us great encouragement going forward. We are participants in this great drama, and our collaboration brings it about. It is through our hands and hearts that God works to make God's dream a reality. This same God who raised Lazarus (and Jesus) from the dead is working through us and our parishes to breathe new life.

Whatever renewal and reform that takes place will inevitably involve change and will be accompanied by a letting go. We can't change and still have everything the way it has always been. This letting go and not clinging to the ways we have always done things can be like a kind of dying which can prepare the way for newness to emerge. If necessary, are we ready to dismantle in order to rebuild? What needs to be re-organised so that our parish can be life-giving to all people?

Let's continue our mission - to make Jesus known and loved - the best we can. The Spirit will find new ways, even if we don't know yet what they will be.

As we reflect on what it means to be a Church that is Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform, we keep to heart Jesus' words, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" and go forward in confidence as difficult as it may sometimes seem.

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 Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform...”

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 Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform. 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 and 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 Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform?**
- **What is the most loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?**



Give Thanks



Let us conclude in prayer:

God our Father, you have called us
to be witnesses to Jesus
and have commissioned us to lead
all people to encounter him.

Send your Holy Spirit
to enlighten our minds
so that your will may be clear to us
and that we may accept it.

Dwell within our souls
and make our hearts your own.
Transform us into a band of
joyful missionary disciples
so as to share the good news
of Jesus Christ in our communities
through joyful evangelisation and service.

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful,
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Amen

Mary Star of the Sea, pray for us

From the Archdiocese of Detroit website www.aod.org

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



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.

Prepared by the Catholic Life & Faith Formation team, Office for Evangelisation, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay.
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