

## Vox Episcopi - The Voice of the Bishop

21 July 2022

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

No doubt many of you have been following the media reports regarding the Second Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia. It is my hope over the coming weeks and months to begin to unpack the work of the Plenary Council, which along with the upcoming Synod on Synodality, will help inform our Broken Bay Pastoral Mission, *One in Christ*.

In the meantime, might I encourage you to remember that the Plenary Council was an ecclesial event, not a media event. The various reports presented in the print media and the electronic media, tend to inflame the process, decisions, and outcomes of what has been a long and fruitful process of listening and discernment.

One of the fruits of the Plenary Council is that it has raised a whole dimension in ecclesial life about listening. Inspired by the Book of Revelation, we have asked, “**What is the Holy Spirit saying to the Church?**” This question is fundamental for the Christian. The question is not merely an inquiry, it is a profession of faith. It confesses that the community of the Church, to which all the baptised belong, is in fact a communion in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As Catholic Christians, we believe that we are anointed by the Holy Spirit as the People of God. The Holy Spirit is constantly revealing to the Body of Christ the will of God the Father. Every member of Christ’s Body is called each day to discern the voice of God calling us to life, ministry, and mission.

The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus, alive in every living member of the Church. The Holy Spirit draws the followers of Christ together into blessed communion. The Holy Spirit animates and sends baptised women and men into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ.

As we can plainly see, this is much more than a media event. Consequently, our ongoing listening and discerning cannot be focused on what we read reported in the secular media. There is a simple process that will help us unfold the work of the Plenary Council in Broken Bay. It begins with trust and hope in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without this it would be very easy to fall into ideological divisions. That is certainly not what the Holy Spirit asks of us. The Holy Spirit binds us together, fills us with divine life, and urges us to proclaim the love and mercy of God to all whom we encounter.

The next phase of the Plenary Council is for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

(ACBC) to receive the Acts and Decrees of the Council formally in November 2022. At this time, both the Acts and the Decrees will be forwarded to the Holy See for reception and consideration. The Holy Father will be part of this process, which signifies the movement of the Holy Spirit drawing the Catholic Church in Australia more deeply into communion with the Successor of Peter, and therefore with the Universal Church to which we belong. This phase may take up to 12 months before the ACBC receives the approval for implementation and engagement in the local Churches.

In the meantime, I encourage the whole community of the Church of Broken Bay, people, priests, and deacons, to join together in prayer and charity, as together we continue to engage in our Pastoral Mission of evangelisation, catechesis, communion, and mission – *One in Christ*.

May the Holy Spirit of God stir into flame the grace of baptism in each of us.

With my prayers and blessing,

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