

Part 3: Collective responsibility - making our church what Christ intended in today's world

It's only two weeks now until the formal announcement at Pentecost of a '**2020 Plenary**'. What is even more important is the two year period before then during which you, I and all People of God have the opportunity, and more importantly the responsibility, to help make our Church what Christ intended in today's world. This short series of introductory articles will hopefully help prepare us for whatever lies ahead, uncomfortable as some of it is likely to be at first.

Those well conscious of need for renewal in today's declining Church in the Western world will already have thoughts on what Christ's teachings and example require us to do to address institutional failings and more adequately fulfil its God-given mission today. Many of the issues have been well canvassed openly and publicly, but now it is the time for collective action. If ever there was need in today's challenging world for goodness, honesty, social justice and integrity it is now and Pope Francis, among a few others, is boldly pursuing this around the world. As far as the 2020 Plenary is concerned the period immediately ahead is intended as a time of 'engaged reckoning' for the Catholic Church in Australia.

History shows it's far easier to talk about change than introduce it. However whilst of course there remains a very great deal of faithful goodness in the Church, where there is need let go of institutional constraints that have become un-Christ-like, harmful and contrary to God's loving and merciful inclusiveness there is urgent need now for honesty and humility together with prayerful discernment on how to renew. That is basically the essence of the two year period preceding the 2020 Plenary.

Whilst we may have already collected thoughts, there is much to be reminded of and be guided by during the period ahead. This includes statements from the Church, from the 2020 Plenary committee, from the Royal Commission into institutional response to Child Sexual abuse, from the Truth Justice and healing Commission, from an Open Letter to the bishops of Australia from 4,000 Catholics, comments from various Australian Catholic renewal groups, and exhortations from Pope Francis. These are being assembled for convenient reference. Meanwhile the website of the 2020 Plenary Committee is now operational and available at <http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/> Of all these resources the major resource will be our collective discernment over the period ahead, guided by the Holy Spirit. The 2020 Plenary Committee succinctly describes the process as "**Listening to God by listening to one another**".

By the time the '2020 Plenary' is formally announced at Pentecost we should already be generally clear about what it is, confident of its potential, and individually prepared to respectfully contribute thoughts over the next two years, to an open, humble and honest process of discussion and discernment, forming conclusions for decision at the Plenary Assembly over the years 2020/2021, the first since 1937.