

## Plenary Council Session 14 February 2019

### South Belconnen Parish

- A Church that communicates well to the ordinary person, particularly those who feel alienated. That they hear and know they are welcome and the Church is sorry for their treatment.
- Open and inviting.
- Sharing his love; bring his message.
- Welcoming all.
- A healing, reconciling Church to those who have been hurt in any way. Those excluded by lifestyle, divorce, hurt through sexual abuse.
- To say sorry for this hurt.
- To allow gender balance in governance.
- Parish-level Faith Education so adults, youth and children can deepen their understanding of their faith.
- For adults this could be in the form of:
  - A series of talks or presentations running over several weeks which include discussion.
  - Mission sessions at parishes and schools by visiting priests or lay presenters.
- For youth and children:
  - Some activities that are already in place that seem to be working well and could be developed further include:
    - Youth groups
    - Kids groups
    - Children's liturgy
    - Sacramental program.
- Strategy – adopt professional communication and marketing techniques and principles in Churches work in Australia.
  - Become an open and caring organisation
  - Undertake professional market research and survey to inform council deliberations
  - To underpin most effective channels for faith education of youth and adults.
- To pause, reflect and take a good hard look at ourselves and to be honest with ourselves as to what we find
- To discern how we can do better.
- To develop a strategy to do better.
- Our Archbishop, Christopher Prowse, recently encouraged us to listen humbly and speak courageously as we move into 2019. This admirable sentiment sits uneasily with the ban on Letters to the Editor in the Catholic Voice, the diocesan paper. This ban was imposed by Archbishop Coleridge when he was Bishop of Canberra -Goulburn and has never been rescinded, despite many requests particularly in the run-up to the Plenary Council.

The Diocesan website does not have the submission which was completed around August 2018 after the Listening and Dialogue sessions, because 'individuals and

members of the media confuse submissions made with the official position of the Archdiocese.' (letter to parishioner from Diocesan official, Feb 2019).

Has the submission actually been sent to the Council? What is the status of the submission, which itself seems to only contain the views of the Canberra Deanery, not the rest of the diocese? Will there be another 'official' submission? Will both have the same authority, or is our Archbishop content to keep his peace knowing that he and the rest of the hierarchy will control the final decisions of the Council ?

- I believe God would call the Church in Australia to a deeper conversion through prayer, the sacraments and seeking deeper understanding of our faith.
  - Many of my Catholic family and friends see Mass and the Sacraments as optional (especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation), and don't see them as important or relevant today.
  - Also, many people in my generation no longer attend Church. In my experience we received very little explanation of why our faith is important, or what the Church teaches and why. We were pretty much left to work things out on our own and decide for ourselves. I suspect many people stopped going to Church without knowing what they were missing.
- The Sacraments need to be explained and promoted in a positive way, and be accessible.
  - It would be extremely helpful if the Sacrament of Reconciliation was available before every Mass (especially for those that find it hard to get to Reconciliation due to family and work commitments).
  - If possible have a central Church where the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered frequently, or even all day for one day a week.
  - St Benedict's Narrabundah and St Joseph's O'Connor have Eucharistic adoration most days of the week, and the upcoming 24 Hours of Adoration at St Christopher's Cathedral is also a great initiative.
- There is also a great need for solid faith education at all levels – for adults, youth and children.
  - This could take the form of parish-based presentations and discussion groups (for example, St Joseph's O'Connor runs a monthly Theology Reading and Discussion Group, "Unpacking the Creed").
  - Make use of resources for parish and group study (such as "Genesis to Jesus" or "The Bible and the Sacraments" by the St Paul Centre, or the FORMED website by the Augustine Institute).
  - Protestant churches tend to have an excellent focus on children's ministry and youth outreach. They are very committed to teaching their children and young people the

basics of the Christian faith and the Bible - they don't wait for them to decide for themselves when they grow up. The Catholic Church used to do this with the Catechism.

- If Catholic children don't receive the opportunity to learn the basics of their faith and Catholic teaching from their families, schools or parishes, how will they receive it?
- The core beliefs of our Catholic faith need to be taught more explicitly in Catholic parishes and schools.
- This should include an age-appropriate version of the Catechism (such as the YOUCAT youth catechism for young people, and YOUCAT for Kids for children).
- It is great to see initiatives like the Belconnen Youth Group and Kids Group, children's liturgy, Fusion youth outreach and youth conferences. Hopefully groups and activities like these will continue and expand.