

THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' PLENARY COUNCIL

The faithful have been invited to make submissions to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference much touted 'plenary council'. In Appendix I is a list of issues put before the faithful for their consideration in making submissions, 'Matters the Plenary Council should consider'. In Appendix II, in contrast, is the oath of office of a Catholic bishop.

The question that must trouble the faithful confronted with this list of 'matters' is "How do you respond to stupidity?" especially stupidity demonstrated by men who are supposed to be among the best educated in the country? What on earth have any—repeat *any*—of the 'matters' the Council 'should consider' to do with the salvation of the souls of the faithful, the promotion of the faith established on earth by Jesus Christ, or the ennoblement of Christ's Catholic Church? What have any to do with the bishops' fulfilment of the duties that follow on their oaths of office? Why are they wasting their time and ours on such trivia instead of addressing the appalling losses among the faithful and correcting the plague of liturgical and sacramental abuses to which the observance of their oaths compels them?

The 'matters' the bishops seek to put before the faithful include the ideological, the perverted and the disordered, as if involvement in them was a desiderata. Its draftsman's immersion in the *spiritus mundi* rather than the spirit of Catholicism is patent. The invocation of Vatican II in support is an irrelevancy.

Practising homosexuals are morally perverted. They do not cease to be morally perverted because their identity is hidden under an acronym. Women are, through the Divine ordination, in subjection to men. (*Genesis* 3: 16) That is Catholic teaching, opposed to the Feminist obsession. Their subjection is the reason why the sacrament of Order can never be validly conferred on a woman. (*Summa Theologiae* Suppl. Q. 39, a. 1, resp.) A woman is neither to teach nor exercise authority over man in the Church as St Paul has clearly taught (*I Timothy* 2: 12; *I Corinthians* 14: 34). The insistence on this order between women and men, established by Almighty God, does not operate to deny—

-) the peculiar talents of women,
-) their undoubted powers of intellect and of will,
-) that many women are morally better than men,
-) the authority entrusted to them in temporal matters. (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, op. cit., ad 1, 2 & 3)

Nor does this insistence demean women or diminish the obligations of men to cherish and respect them, attitudes which are equally part of Catholic teaching (*Ephesians* 5: 22-30; *Colossians* 3: 18, 19; *I Peter* 3: 1-7; *Titus* 2: 5).

The calculated breach of the Church's teaching out of deference to Feminist ideology has disordered the thinking of the faithful as it has disrupted the Church's liturgy. It

has occasioned the loss to the faith of many. The sooner women are removed from the sanctuaries of our churches and positions of authority in the Church, the sooner will the faithful return to the right exercise of their religion.

The answer to problems in the practice of the faith is not to enlarge the involvement of the laity but to return to the priest his rightful authority. The proper position of the laity is as the faithful of Jesus Christ, subject to the priest's instruction and with the blessing of the sacraments he bestows. The Catholic Church is not a democracy. It is a monarchy with Christ as its Head. The priest is his vicar in the local parish. The error of appealing to some democratic authority is one of the many errors of Vatican II whose members sought to impose Protestant over Catholic principle. The bishops' appeal to a 'plenary council' is part of this syndrome.

Those who have drifted away from the Church have done so, not because of fear of tradition but because the Church's tradition has been destroyed by the reformers of the Church's liturgy. These rightly object to the pretence of the *novus ordo* where the Mass, emasculated with borrowings from the Protestant, has been trivialised, reduced to little more than a ceremony of preaching at people, while the faithful must endure series of mindless, and unnecessary, 'Prayers of the Faithful'. This criticism is easily tested. Let the bishops forbid, *ad experimentum*, during weekdays (save on the celebration of Solemnities), prayers of the faithful, offertory processions and preaching (by priest or any other 'minister' or lay person) whether before, during, or at the end of Mass, for a period of six months, and note the results.

Only one of the 'matters' in the list bears upon the faith, n. 6, and that in a manner deleterious to it. In the *Statement of Conclusions* that attended Australia's bishops on their 1998 *ad limina*, they were warned specifically against indulgence in the Third Rite of Reconciliation, the permission for whose abuse to their priests many had given by their silence or inaction. It seems the bishops who survive of the 'class of '98', and the successors of those who have not, are like dogs that return to their vomit, like washed pigs that return to wallow in the mire (II *Peter* 2: 22).

Quite without the intention of its authors, the Plenary Council raises for the Catholic faithful three issues.

1. Are the bishops of the Catholic Church in Australia, despite their oaths, votaries of some sect that calls itself 'Catholic' but is in fact a species of Protestantism, or of Modernism, or of secular humanism?
2. Is not the behaviour of each bishop in slavishly following the folly of his peers such as to render him more like a sheep rather than a shepherd?
3. Is there among the bishops, one—JUST ONE—who will stand up for Catholic principle against the general fatuousness of the members of the Conference by distancing himself from the rest?

Michael Baker

15th August, 2018—*Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Appendix I

Matters the Plenary Council should consider

1. Focus on what was encapsulated in Vatican II, i.e., the dignity, vocation, role and responsibility of laity, and work towards being a true synodal church, with unity in diversity and structures to reflect a synodal church. Forming and empowering parish and diocesan pastoral councils should be part of this. Canon 514 (which heavily emphasises the bishop's role in diocesan pastoral councils) should be reviewed.
2. Focus on developing a more inclusive church. God's love is inclusive. The church has spent too much time excluding rather than including, e.g., women, LGBT people, the divorced, people of other religions. Except in remote dioceses, the church fails to engage with indigenous people. Many people who have drifted away from the church feel intimidated to return by past traditions of the church.
3. The church taking deliberate steps to be more visible in the community and the media, not afraid to be providing answers to the big questions about life and death and spreading the Christian messages of salvation, forgiveness and compassion.
4. Reinvigoration of parish life so that the parish is an inviting place for everyone, reflecting God's love: children, young families, the elderly, across ethnic, gender and economic lines. With the move to larger parishes, smaller communities within parishes need to be promoted, as in the early church, communities of faith which can reach out to the wider community. People yearn to belong to caring communities. Home masses and community prayer should be encouraged. Family groups should be reintroduced.
5. Whether the top-down structure of the church is right for today and whether more authority should be delegated (principle of subsidiarity). There should be greater emphasis on the role of priest as pastor, with administration to be carried more prominently by the laity. Each diocese should be required to have a Human Relations plan, based on the sacraments and pastoral care services.
6. Re-introduction of the third rite of reconciliation.
7. Taking steps to change the culture of clericalism in the church. The clergy must be required to undertake ongoing training.
8. Instituting greater openness in the process for appointment of bishops.
9. Taking steps to ensure that women are involved in key decision making roles in the church. Women deacons and women chaplains should be considered.
10. The ordination of married priests.
11. Greater focus on youth. Providing regular platforms for participation of youth in the church. The liturgy, including its language and music, should be reinvigorated to make it more welcoming for youth. There should be more talking with youth, not talking at them. In giving their homilies, priests need to be able to talk with children. Mechanisms should be explored to ensure the church is accessible to youth on line, in schools, at sporting events. The church needs to make more use of digital technology, promote peer to peer youth ministry and promote youth retreats and conferences so the

young can meet God in their hearts. Church groups, e.g., St Vincent de Paul Society, need to be made more welcoming to youth participation.

12. Supporting authentic, faith-filled teachers in schools. There needs to be greater emphasis in schools on teaching the tenets and framework of the faith.

13. A more active social justice stance from the church, more dialogue from the pulpit, more promotion of involvement by the laity in social justice matters. Church leaders should embrace and promote “Laudate Si” (sic), recognising its emphasis on the need to combat climate change as a fundamental social justice issue.

14. Ecumenism needs to be reinvigorated. Leaders of other Christian churches should be invited to provide advice to the Plenary Council, especially on matters of church governance. There should be an ecumenism commission in every diocese charged with responsibility for embracing dialogue with people of other faiths.

15. Using the recommendations of the Royal Commission as a learning and teaching mechanism to show leadership to the world. All recommendations of the Commission relevant to the Catholic Church need to be responded to. Each parish should be asked to consider making an apology to victims of abuse and their families, with a symbol of contrition, e.g., memorial plaque, planting a tree. Bishops must not delay any longer the release of the TJHC report.

16. The Plenary Council itself needs urgent consideration so that its purpose is properly articulated, its membership is understood and the role of the laity is properly explained. There is a sense in which people believe that the laity will not really be involved in meaningful decision making in the Plenary Council and will have merely a focus group role. The whole process is too long because many issues need urgent attention now. A woman should be appointed co-chair of the Plenary Council or, if this is not possible under Canon Law, a woman should be appointed deputy chair.

Appendix II

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I,, with firm faith believe and profess each and everything that is contained in the Symbol of faith, namely:

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. 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. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

With firm faith, I also believe everything contained in the word of God, whether written or handed down in Tradition, which the Church, either by a solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, sets forth to be believed as divinely revealed.

I also firmly accept and hold each and everything definitively proposed by the Church regarding teaching on faith and morals. Moreover, I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman Pontiff or the College of Bishops enunciate when they exercise their authentic Magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim these teachings by a definitive act.

OATH OF FIDELITY ON ASSUMING AN OFFICE TO BE EXERCISED IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

(Formula to be used by members of the Christian faithful mentioned in canon 833, nn. 5-8)

I,, in assuming the office of, promise that in my words and in my actions I shall always preserve communion with the Catholic Church.

With great care and fidelity I shall carry out the duties incumbent on me toward the Church, both universal and particular, in which, according to the provisions of the law, I have been called to exercise my service.

In fulfilling the charge entrusted to me in the name of the Church, I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and explain it, and I shall avoid any teachings contrary to it.

I shall follow and foster the common discipline of the entire Church and I shall maintain the observance of all ecclesiastical laws, especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law.

With Christian obedience I shall follow what the Bishops, as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith, declare, or what they, as those who govern the Church, establish. I shall also faithfully assist the diocesan Bishops, so that the apostolic activity, exercised in the name and by mandate of the Church, may be carried out in communion with the Church.

So help me God, and God's Holy Gospels on which I place my hand.
