

Dear Fathers, Parish officers and lay leaders

Thank you, Fathers, for your conversation in the last Clergy meeting concerning the upcoming Plenary Council 2020. You will by now have received a letter from Bishop Columba to be made available to parishioners this Sunday.

As I said at the meeting on Tuesday, it will soon be important to identify, if you can, a few people from your parishes who might be able to facilitate some conversations in your area. (There is a suggested process for this. Go to the website and find the 'Support Kit for Selecting your Local Animator'.) We do not need to follow the guidelines as they are set out in every detail. Some of our parishes may simply ask a willing lay person to help set up some small groups to start the conversation. The Plenary website offers suggestions only, we can organise ourselves as it suits us to in our various contexts.

Please go to the Plenary Council 2020 website - just Google "Plenary Council 2020" - and read the material that is available there and familiarise yourselves with the resources available. When you have identified a few lay people to support the process, please ask them to go to the website and read about what resources are available.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember at the outset is the attitude or disposition you want to nurture in 'animators'/facilitators and yourselves in order to make it possible for people to feel safe to speak their minds respectfully.

These local forums for conversation are opportunities for people to speak what they think the Spirit is revealing in these challenging times. In light of some of the pain some people carry and the healing that some people may potentially seek, it will be very important to allow voices to be heard without judgement or defensiveness from others present.

Facilitators and animators will use guidelines to support them to maintain a degree of detachment so that conversation can actually happen. Animators will record some of the issues/themes/concerns arising. Any note taking must not identify any persons, but be simply a way to keep track of the relevant issues being brought up in conversation. The Principal at your local parish school will be aware of the Plenary processes and will be very willing and able to help if you need.

Please help your parishioners to know that the Deanery Assemblies which will happen in early 2019 - possibly after Easter at this stage - are separate from the Plenary event but supportive of its aims. That is, the Bishop, desires to hear for himself what it is that is of concern to his people in this Diocese so that, together with his priests and lay people, he can better plan for the future and discern a renewed vision and commitment for our Diocese.

Please call me, or encourage an enthusiastic parishioner to call me, to talk further about how to go about preparing for both the Deanery Assemblies and the Plenary Council.

Fr Chris, Fr Line and myself will soon provide you with more information re processes and proposed dates for Deanery gatherings in your region.

Please make sure that your parishioners know about the Council website and encourage them to seek more information from either myself or the representatives of the Council preparation processes. (There are contact names, addresses and phone numbers available on the website if people want to connect with the Council facilitators directly.)

Thank you in anticipation of your enthusiastic support of this national Church initiative.

Kate Englebrecht
Diocesan Director of Mission/Vice-Chancellor
Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes
15 Johnson Street, Forbes 2871
Phone: 02 68539350
Mobile: 0420309689

