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Getting Ready for Plenary Council 2020

No doubt many of you will have heard about the upcoming Plenary Council in 2020.

The Plenary Council is a meeting which all Catholics in Australia are invited to become involved in. It will be the fifth Plenary Council in Australian Church history, the first since 1937 and the first to feature women and lay people. The Council will be a unique opportunity for us all to listen to God in all the ways God speaks to us and at a time when the Church in Australia is facing significant challenges.

We will listen to each other as we ask ourselves: What is God asking of us at this time?

The Plenary Council 2020 will happen in two sessions. The first session is in October 2020 in Adelaide and the second session, in mid 2021, in a city to be decided upon. The delegates of the Council fall into two categories: Those who *must* be called and those who *can* be called. Those who *must* be called include bishops and vicar generals, some superiors and congregational leaders. Those who *can* be called include some lay people, clergy and retired bishops. All Council delegates have a vote. Some have a *deliberative* vote and some have a *consultative* vote. Ultimately, *deliberative* decisions are forwarded to Rome to ensure they are consistent with Church teaching and then can become binding for the Catholic Church in Australia. The process of listening and dialogue within parishes and Catholic organisations around the country over the next 18 months or so will help form the agenda for the 2020 Plenary Council.

As preparation for the Plenary Council here in the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, we will have various parish, school and agency gatherings and a Deanery Assembly in each of our three Diocesan Deanery regions in the first half of 2019. These meetings and gatherings will be facilitated by lay people from your own communities and supported by your parish priests. In coming weeks you will hear more about what your community can do to encourage conversations that allow people to speak their minds boldly and listen to each other respectfully. I encourage all Catholics, whether devout or disillusioned, fervent or frustrated, to seize this opportunity to speak what is on your minds and in your hearts. The conversations we will have in our own local communities will serve to give you a chance to speak and to listen and it will give me a chance to hear what your concerns are. We can't all go to the Plenary Council, but I hope to be able to gather from you a deeper sense of how the Holy Spirit might be calling us in these times.

Just go to the Plenary Council 2020 website for details of what the Plenary Council is and how it will happen nationally. There you will also find resources such as: *A Parish Guide to the Listening and Dialogue Process*.

The Chancery Office in Forbes will soon be in touch with each parish to help you to know how we can all be involved in our Deanery Assemblies in 2019 and how you can participate further in preparations for the Plenary Council. This is an exciting opportunity for our Church and a time for us to listen to 'the signs of the times' as we discern together how to live our Catholic faith and identity in the context of a challenging world.

Yours In Christ,

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