



## Pope Francis sends blessings as Plenary Council process begins

Pope Francis has sent his support and blessings to the Catholic Church in Australia as it commences a three-year process to consider its future through the Plenary Council 2020.

The Church in Australia, on the feast of Pentecost, yesterday marked the official launch of the Plenary Council, which will culminate in gatherings in 2020 and 2021 to consider the Church's governance, laws and practice.

In a special message for the Catholic community in Australia, Pope Francis said that he hoped "through patient dialogue and faith-filled discernment, the conciliar journey will confirm the Catholics in Australia in a spirit of fraternal unity and missionary discipleship".

That, the Holy Father said, would enable them to be "a leaven of holiness, justice and reconciliation in today's rapidly changing society".

Perth Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, president of the Plenary Council, expressed his gratitude for the Pope's encouraging message.

"We are embarking together on an important initiative that holds great promise for the Catholic Church in Australia," Archbishop Costelloe said. "It is wonderful to know that the Holy Father is aware of what we are doing and fully supportive of it.

"The Pope's prayer for us reminds us of our great need for the wisdom, harmony and openness to God's will, which are the gift of the Holy Spirit, without which the Plenary Council will not bear the appropriate fruit which we pray will renew the face of the Church in Australia."

Pentecost also marked the start of the first phase of listening and dialogue, which will help shape the agenda for the Plenary Council sessions in 2020 and 2021.

Plenary Council facilitator Lana Turvey-Collins said the new website launched yesterday will help all people participate in conversations with friends and family, large groups and small, to consider the Plenary Council's central question: "What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?"

Said Ms Turvey-Collins: "The Plenary Council will, like no other event in the Church's history in Australia, allow all Catholics to shape a discussion about the future of our Church. The website now has material to support the important discussions that will take place across the country and I encourage people to head to the website and consider how they will participate in this historic moment."

Archbishop Costelloe said he hopes the Pope's message, on top of the strong local interest, "will encourage all Catholics to take part with enthusiasm, and great hope, in the journey of the Plenary Council upon which we are now embarking".

Visit the Plenary Council website at: [www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

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