



Sharing Our Story
Celebrating Our Faith
Shaping Our Future

“Let us renew the gift of our Baptism which calls us forth in missionary service.”
Bishop Greg Bennet

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

As we slowly emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, we take stock of our parish and school communities and notice what has changed, what opportunities might be open to us and how we can be more attentive to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

The Diocesan *Gaudium et Spes* Plenary Team has had some lengthy discussion on how best to assist you and your communities as you seek to strengthen the bonds of community and pastoral life that have undergone so much change in the last 18 months.

You will recall the energy, joy and faith which brought together the People of God in our Diocese for the 2019 Diocesan Assembly in ***Sharing our Story – Celebrating our Faith – Shaping our Future***. The Assembly focussed on five themes drawn from Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium - The Joy of the Gospel* and was given added impetus by the national journey toward the fifth Plenary Council of Australia.

As you are aware, due to the pandemic, the First Assembly of the Plenary Council was postponed from 2020 to October 2021 and instead of a gathering being held in one venue, as was originally envisaged, it will now be conducted via a multimodal format in five locations around Australia. This First Assembly will be convened from 3-10 October this year with the Second Assembly gathering to be held in July 2022. Through dialogue, prayer and discernment, the Plenary Council Members will articulate future directions for the Catholic Church across Australia.

In the light of all that is happening, it is timely to keep in mind the wonderful resource from our 2019 Diocesan Assembly, *Diocesan Assembly Ideas for Pastoral Initiatives*, which we hope that you will use as a way of re-engaging your faith communities. The fruits of the Diocesan Assembly are a rich gift for us and a guide for our future direction.

We would like each parish to further explore the *Diocesan Assembly Ideas for Pastoral Initiatives*. While clergy received a hard copy of this resource in 2019, a digital version may be downloaded from the Diocesan website <https://www.cdsale.org.au/ideas-for-pastoral-initiatives>

As Bishop Greg has encouraged us in his Pastoral Letter for Pentecost 2021:

Let us set our course anew!

As Bishop Greg says, “While Covid-19 may have interrupted the journey and set us off course, let us come together once more and take up the task before us. Let us discern our way forward through the lens of faith. Covid-19 disrupted our lives; however, it proved how resilient, imaginative, creative, caring, compassionate and faithful our parish communities are.

In light of the Pentecost message, and as you gather in your parishes at your formal pastoral meetings, or informal gatherings, we have the opportunity to reflect.

Perhaps the questions below may help as you list your responses to the following:

- What did we learn about our parish community because of Covid-19?
- What pastoral initiatives emerged at our parish which should not be lost?
- What could we have done differently and how might we move forward?

The Diocesan Assembly has provided a rich compass for the journey ahead for every parish and also provides direction for the journey ahead in our Diocese. Upon this foundation, we listen to the voice of the Plenary Council. I invite you to use the Assembly’s pastoral ideas in a spirit of gentle discernment and dialogue by taking your time together, listening to one another, praying with one another so as to identify those pastoral initiatives which you will work toward.

Our Assembly provides pastoral priorities: Faith Formation and Spirituality; Leadership and Governance; Families and Vocation; Liturgy and Prayer; and, The Welcoming Community. Each of these fundamental aspects of Church life underpin who we are and who we are called to be, and invite us to consider our response from both a parish and diocesan perspective.”

(Pentecost Letter 2021, <https://www.cdsale.org.au/setting-forth-pentecost-2021>)

It’s time to our share our stories, celebrate our faith and begin to shape the future!

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God...

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,
but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 Tim 1:6a, 7.

Sophy Morley

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Getting started

- Call an initial gathering of clergy, parish staff and your parish leadership team. This should include your Pastoral Council and Plenary Team (if those two groups are distinct), school staff and interested parishioners. You are encouraged to invite all the parish representatives who attended the Diocesan Assembly in 2019 to come and contribute their insights.
- Each parish should have one or more people who are Plenary animators/contacts for your parish. They will be a valuable resource for your faith community. Involve them into your pastoral meetings so that they may support any pastoral initiatives. They will be an important link between your local community, diocese and the national journey towards the First Assembly of the Plenary (3-10 October 2021) and beyond.
- While some parishes may have begun reanimating their groups after our several COVID shut-downs, others may not have commenced that process. The *Diocesan Assembly Ideas for Pastoral Initiatives* is a pathway for all of our Diocesan parishes in which parish life can be enhanced. The involvement of your leadership teams is a vital element in your pastoral planning. Using the *Diocesan Assembly Ideas for Pastoral Initiatives* offers a pathway through which your pastoral planning can take shape and flourish.

We recommend that this becomes a regular agenda item in your meetings.

- At each meeting choose one of the Diocesan Assembly Themes and discern what your parish could undertake in that particular area.
- Involve as many of your parishioners as possible so that they may participate in sharing the story so as to shape the future.
- We want to honour and affirm the good work that is being done by many people in their faith communities across the Diocese. The Diocese wants to hear from your community and share your good news with others
 - What stories would you like to share about the good things happening in your parish?
 - Are there topics close to your heart which you wish to share with the Plenary Council Members who are to represent our Diocese at the First Assembly in October this year?
 - Would you be interested in some Regional Gatherings with the Bishop around the Diocese?

Materials for your Gathering

1. Ensure that each person has a copy of the *Diocesan Assembly Ideas for Pastoral Initiatives* resource. Visit <https://www.cdsale.org.au/ideas-for-pastoral-initiatives>, download and print copies for all those attending.
2. Download and print copies of your Parish Social Profile and the Diocesan Social Profile from <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/catholic-social-profiles/>

Meeting outline

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome all who have gathered, and invite brief introductions if there are newcomers to the group.

Preliminary remarks

The Group Leader or Meeting Chair outlines the purpose of the gathering.

Pray Choose one of the following prayers

1. Prayer to the Holy Spirit for Guidance

Spirit of God, you are here among us,
you are here within us:
we see your presence
in the wonder of creation;
we feel your presence
in our love for one another.

Enable us to use this meeting time wisely:
may our deliberations be productive,
may our decisions be constructive,
may our humour be life-giving!

Allow us to be free
and to bring freedom to others.
Help us to accept forgiveness
and to work for reconciliation.
Open our eyes to injustice
and empower us to work for justice.

Rekindle within us
the passion of faith and hope
that gives us every reason to celebrate
and to proclaim with conviction
the Good News of Jesus Christ.
Spirit of God, be with us now. Amen.

2. Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in us O Holy Spirit,
that our thoughts may all be holy.
Act in us O Holy Spirit,
that our work, too, may be holy.
Draw our hearts O Holy Spirit,
that we love but what is holy.
Strengthen us O Holy Spirit,

to defend all that is holy.
Guard us, then, O Holy Spirit,
that we always may be holy. Amen.

(St Augustine of Canterbury 6th C, alt.)

3. The Plenary Council Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost.
Come, Holy Spirit of the great South Land.

O God, bless and unite all your people in Australia
and guide us on the pilgrim way of the Plenary Council.

Give us the grace to see your face in one another
and to recognise Jesus, our companion on the road.

Give us the courage to tell our stories
and to speak boldly of your truth.

Give us ears to listen humbly to each other
and a discerning heart to hear what you are saying.

Lead your Church into a hope-filled future,
that we may live the joy of the Gospel.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
bread for the journey from age to age. Amen.

Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

4. Opening Prayer of the Second Vatican Council

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.
Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.
Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God, sharing the glory of Father and Son.
You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.
Unite us to yourself in the bond of love

and keep us faithful to all that is true.
As we gather in your name, may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you, and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants.
We ask this of You who live and reign with the
Father and the Son, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(From The Book of Blessings, p.191.

This prayer was used before every session of the Second Vatican Council 1962-1965)

Explore

Take 10 minutes to explore your **Parish Social Profile** (based on 2016 Australian National Census) that was prepared by the National Centre for Pastoral Research.

Visit <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/catholic-social-profiles/> and download the **Diocesan Social Profile and your own Parish Social Profile**

1. Are there any facts in your Parish Social Profile that surprise you? If so, why?
2. Compare with the Diocesan Social Profile. How does the diocesan snapshot differ to the parish profile? What might that mean for our parish situation?
3. Are there things which we need to keep in mind about the makeup of our parish community and how these might influence our pastoral ministry?

Silence Spend a few minutes in silence, reflecting on what you have read and shared. In the silence of your heart, ask for the Holy Spirit to guide the group as you move to discuss pastoral action in your community.

Discussion

For each question, the group leader invites each person to respond, without interruption or correction, using the same process as for the Listening and Dialogue conversation, before general discussion follows.

Keeping in mind the experience of the last 18 months...

1. What are the things that are giving us life in the areas of
(choose one theme)
 - Faith Formation and Spirituality?
 - Leadership and Governance?
 - Families and Vocation?
 - Liturgy and Prayer?
 - The Welcoming Community?

What are our experiences and what are we hearing from our people?

2. Now open the ***Diocesan Assembly Ideas for Pastoral Initiatives*** Resource.
What will we focus on next? (using the same theme as for Q 1)
What opportunities might there be for our community at this time?
3. How will this happen? Who are we inviting to participate?
Use the *Diocesan Assembly Pastoral Initiatives* for ideas.

Closing Prayer

Finally, after discussion has come to a close, spend a few moments in silence and listen to what is resonating in your heart.

Each person is invited to share with others: *"I give thanks for"*

Then gather all this sharing in a prayer of thanksgiving.

1. Gracious God,

Through this time of gathering, sharing and discerning,
you invited each of us to hear the Holy Spirit in the voices of others,
to challenge our own will, desires, fears and prejudices
and to be open to your will.

Lord Jesus, thank you for guiding us as our beacon of light, truth and life
so that we can clearly see how best to honour and serve you,
our neighbours and our true selves.

We pray that our decisions today have stayed true to you
and to the faith and trust that you have in us.

Through this experience, may the Holy Spirit ignite feelings of joy, and deeper faith,
greater hope and trust, greater love and peace, greater courage
and compassion in each of us and in your holy Church as we journey forward
together.

Amen.

(Plenary Council Listening and Discernment Guide)

2. Creator God,

We thank you for the encounter with one another today.

We know that where two or three are gathered, you are in our midst.

Thank you for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and with passion,
and the humility to listen with open hearts.

We ask you to continue to walk with us,
as we discover the pathway toward the future you are calling us to.

Amen.

(Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue Guide)

Additional Discussion and Resources



As an overarching framework for your prayer, discernment and discussion, you may wish to explore the Plenary Council Agenda which is the foundation for the proceedings of the First Assembly in October 2021 and the Second Assembly in July 2022.

Visit the Plenary Council <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/> Click on the green tab for the Agenda.

The guiding principle of the Plenary Council is summed up:

As children of God, disciples of Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Members of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia are called to develop concrete proposals to create a more missionary, Christ-centred Church in Australia at this time.

“I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.”

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 27

The Plenary Council Agenda poses 16 questions, arranged under the themes

- Conversion
- Prayer
- Formation
- Structure
- Governance
- Institutions

These questions assist us in our discernment about how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is

- Missionary and evangelising
- Inclusive, participatory and synodal
- Humble, healing and merciful
- Prayerful and Eucharistic
- A joyful, hope-filled and servant community
- Open to conversion, renewal and reform

The particular pastoral initiatives from the Diocesan Assembly that you have decided to implement within your faith community can be placed within one or more of the Plenary Council Agenda's areas of discussion.

To take an example, let's look at the following question under the **Formation** heading of the Plenary Council Agenda:

How might we better form leaders for mission – adults, children and families, couples and single people?

We could consider this in the context of Faith Formation and Spirituality, Families and Vocation, Liturgy and Prayer or The Welcoming Community, all of which are outlined in the Diocesan Assembly resource.

The initiatives that your community chooses to implement might be guided by these umbrella questions from the Plenary Council. They provide us with *the big picture*, the overall vision for a missionary Church.

Diocesan Support

The **Diocesan *Gaudium et Spes* Plenary Team** is ready to support and assist you.

How may we assist you? We can offer Zoom or physical gatherings for parishes or regions, support Clergy and offer guidance to your Pastoral Council or Leadership Team.

Our Team Members

Sophy Morley (Convenor)	Diocesan Pastoral Office	P: 03 5622 6677 E: smorley@sale.catholic.org.au
Bishop Greg Bennet		
Siji Dominic	Pakenham Parish	
Jenny Fitzgerald	Sale Parish	
Michelle Grimsted	Bairnsdale Parish	
Mike Hansen	Traralgon Parish	
Fr Brendan Hogan	Narre Warren Parish	
Deacon Mark Kelly	Drouin & Warragul Parishes, Marist-Sion College	
Lize Privitera	Mary MacKillop Primary School Narre Warren North/Narre Warren Parish	
Katherine Jelavic	Berwick Parish	
Fr Peter Slater VG	Drouin & Warragul Parishes	

Dominic Ryan	Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL)	
Anne Taylor	Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL)	
Cathy Dougan	Secretary, Bishop's Office	E: pa@sale.catholic.org.au

Plenary Council Members

The Plenary Council Members will be representing the Diocese of Sale during the Plenary Council (First Assembly, October 2021 and Second Assembly, July 2022). They are:

Bishop Greg Bennet
 Fr Peter Slater, Vicar General
 Fr Denis O'Bryan, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy
 Mrs Katherine Jelavic
 Mrs Lize Privitera

They are keen to hear from you in the months leading to the First Assembly.

They ask for your prayers as they also ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, grace and wisdom.