



St. Clement of Rome Parish
Bulleen 3105
<https://www.stclementsparishbulleen.org.au>



Plenary Council 2020
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

The St. Clement of Rome Parish Response

PLENARY COUNCIL PREAMBLE:

During the period of August to October 2018, the preparation, planning and dialogue at St. Clement of Rome began. The following strategies were undertaken:

- weekly announcements in Parish bulletin and over the pulpit with Plenary Prayer prayed at Masses.
- displaying the question, "What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time" prominently.
- a dedicated space in the foyer assigned to Plenary 2020, with resources and reflections made available to parishioners.
- a book for written responses in the foyer available for parishioners.
- five formal sessions were conducted with more than 100 responses.
- the question was asked on different occasions within the parish to allow for wide consultation.
- a final full consultation for the parish was held on 27 February 2019.

The input has been rich, candid and inclusive.

EMERGING THEMES:

1. ***Renewed understanding of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and a renewed understanding of doctrine that speaks to contemporary Australians.***

Participants affirmed that God is revealed not only for us but for all. As such there was a call to:

- rediscover the meaning of who God is in the light of suffering.
- rediscover Jesus' vision for the community and for each person, while being mindful of the suffering within and outside the Church.
- a deeper understanding of the role and place of the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, there was the expressed need to:

- re-discover the value and power of love of neighbour.
- reaffirm the individual's and community's roles and responsibilities to love.
- renew faith in Jesus Christ and his message.

- listen, witness to our vocation and to continue building our faith.
- understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

In summary, there was the expressed collective need for a renewed education and formation on the basic tenets of scripture, the dogmas and doctrines of the Church as it applies to the life of the people today.

2. Sexual abuse, healing and reconciliation and related issues.

Almost all participants expressed pain, hurt and anger regarding the sexual abuse and other scandals committed within the Church. At the same time respondents:

- appreciated the work of good, faithful and pastoral priests and the work of the Church as the provider of services in Australia.
- expressed the need to address the issue of sexual abuse at the parish level.
- called for a process or avenue for expressing sorrow, for reconciliation for all – victims, survivors and those indirectly affected – at the parish level.
- viewed transparency to be of utmost importance.
- expressed a need for the Church to demonstrate real repentance and move towards cultural change particularly in relation to clericalism.

3. The need for a more inclusive and universal Church

The issue of child sex abuse within the Church has raised the need to educate and have frank dialogue on other issues regarding:

- first nations peoples and their place and contribution to the Australian Church;
- same-sex attracted people and the inclusion of LGBTQI communities;
- the culture and traditions of new migrants such as those from South Asia, South-East Asia and the Middle-East;
- the need to create space for people to feel at home; to be compassionate, merciful and loving and be willing to share meals socially.

4. Women in the Church

The following issues regarding women were raised:

- domestic violence.
- women's role and leadership: the need to acknowledge, encourage and support women in leadership roles across different sectors within the Church including seminaries and places of formation.
- the issue of women deacons and the insights and value women can bring to preaching the gospels, the celebration of some sacraments and pastoral work.

5. Church and community

Participants expressed the need for:

- a continuously learning Church.
- a return to being a more contemplative Church.
- greater shared responsibility with clergy and people working collaboratively with laity accepted as equals in terms of their status as children of God.
- a truly listening Church beginning with the bishops, clergy and religious.
- all to set good examples of being faithful followers of Christ.
- a Church that continues to inspire.
- a reiteration of the mission of the Church, with all given opportunities to voice concerns.
- the Church to continue strong inter-faith and ecumenical dialogue
- the Church to be aware of and to respond actively to the ever-changing needs of the community.
- the Church to make the best use of technology to engage with the community.
- continuously affirm and value our authentic Catholic identity.

The issue of ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue is recommended as an agenda item for the bishops including the recommendation that representatives of other faiths be invited as observers in Plenary 2020.

The respondents affirmed that the Church is where God's people are. God's home and many of God's people are absent from the table. There was the expressed desire to build and be a more welcoming, hospitable and generous Church.

6. *Social Justice Issues and the Church's response*

The following are some issues expressed as needing urgent attention:

- dysfunctional families and their needs;
- mental wellbeing and spiritual un-ease;
- dementia and issues affecting the aged in the community;
- housing affordability and young families;
- the separated, divorced and single parents;
- care of the earth.

Some respondents called for a focus on social issues and asked how the local parish can respond in practical ways to the immediate needs of the community.

7. *Young people and religious education*

The respondents expressed concern and called for greater attention to be paid to the spiritual needs of the youth and young adults and those who have stopped attending Church once they leave school. There was the expressed opinion that:

- new imaginative and creative ways are needed to inspire our young people to rediscover their God-given faith.
- faith and religion education to encompass and influence all aspects of school life.
- better communication, connection and participation between the school and parish would enhance the whole community.

There was the expressed need for:

- practical follow-up sessions regarding the meaning of sacraments to everyday living with more support and development of teachers/catechists in the area of faith and religious education.
- families to be strongly involved and encouraged to take responsibility for the faith development of their children.
- schools to continue building a culture of faith and Christianity, while respecting other faith traditions.

Schools are fertile ground for evangelization and therefore their leadership is critically significant. The safety and protection of all children, the frail and vulnerable and those with disabilities remains a priority.

In summary, there is a need to deeply reflect on the form and function of Catholic schools, Catholic education and the need to encourage the development of faith of all in the parish.

8. *Liturgy/Governance/ Authority*

Some respondents expressed the need to:

- train all volunteers.
- update or help people interpret some aspects of Church teachings in the light of contemporary situations such as divorce, separation and issues affecting family life.
- dialogue and clarify the question of accountability and responsibility on different levels beginning with the parish community for shared participation and responsibility.
- consider the ordination of married men into the priesthood.
- structure Church and parish governance to be transparent and for accountability.

The hierarchical structure is necessary for practical governance; however, attention must be paid to the role of the laity in Church matters.

Some immediate responses from St. Clement of Rome parish.

The responses have given the parish of St. Clement of Rome much food for thought and action to immediately introduce small but significant changes to revitalize the life of the Parish. These include:

- the training and empowering of the laity in leading formation programs including: Scripture, RCIA and other future initiatives.
- the reestablishment of the Parish Pastoral Council with a more inclusive participation regarding race, gender and ages to reflect more authentically the demographics of the Parish with representation from the school for greater collaboration.
- encouraging the school to hold Plenary Council Sessions for staff and students.

- organizing more social celebrations where parishioners can meet and enjoy friendship.
- the parish working on being a 'Dementia Friendly' parish and review its pastoral provision to the aged in the nearby nursing homes and the housebound.
- Lectors, commentators and all interested volunteers be trained.
- highlighting the need to listen attentively with heart and mind during the Lent reflections and other programmes for the year.
- submitting the responses from 27 February in both Italian and English.
- the school submitting their own report to Plenary 2020.
- continued reminders to the congregation to submit individual responses online.
- the executive team of the PPC meeting to discuss the report before a final report is submitted on 6 March 2019.
- co-hosting a mission from 20 May 2019 – 22 May 2019 on the topic, "**Living a Contemporary Catholic Life of Faith, Hope and Love,**" to be led by Fr. Richard Leonard, SJ.

Completed and submitted 5 March 2019

St. Clement of Rome Parish, Bulleen.