

Our First Parish Meeting – We’re Under Way!

Thirty four parishioners came to our first meeting to explore what might be important for the 2020 Plenary Council to address and hear what we know to date about how it will proceed.

Both Fr Linh and members of the convening group emphasised that our engagement calls us into a difficult but rewarding process of discernment. A number of people articulated a measure of scepticism about the possibility of good outcomes from that process. In the end, all seemed to agree that it is worth a “go” and, if nothing else, our personal learnings will be sufficient reward.

The role of a Plenary Council, its structure, its agenda setting and its participants were described. This information is reproduced [here](#). But the key emphasis was on the fact that our participation in the consultation and discernment processes will be crucial to any success of the Council.

Several people spoke to the role of women in the Church from a number of points of view. A common theme related to women in decision-making roles. Also noted was the difficulty for some women, some religious for example, of just being heard. This will clearly be an issue in other parishes too and hopefully, the listening, hearing and discerning in the Plenary Council processes will lead to significant change.

The matters of women in all orders, including priesthood and of married priests were aired in a sort of passing way. Perhaps we know that these are amongst the most difficult things that the Council could address. Can they be on the agenda? In asking that question, the possible influence of Opus Dei groups in setting the agenda was noted and briefly discussed.

Our current habits of consultation and discernment in the parish were also seen as somewhat deficient. In the first instance, the way to change some of these realities would not require the sort of changes that a Plenary Council need address. The absence of ongoing adult formation programs such as the Alpha program, also noted at this meeting, don’t seem to require any Plenary Council level changes.

Many noted the absence of young folk in our Mass attendances. The connection of this well-known and painful fact to a lack of appropriate activities and liturgies was noted. One energetically put proposal was to engage our school leavers in ongoing social justice activities. Is this not Jesus in action! What would be the freedoms needed that a Plenary Council would facilitate?

The many and difficult responses to the Royal Commission were also noted as was their impact on how we see the way forward. That is what we now set out to discern - the ways forward for all of us in this Church.