

# Plenary Council 2020

*What do you think God  
is asking of us in Australia  
at this time?*

## TIPS FOR FACILITATING A CONVERSATION

### Tips for facilitating a Listening and Dialogue conversation

#### Plenary Council 2020 question:

***What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?***

The 'Listening and Dialogue Guide' is self-explanatory and the following tips may also be of assistance in facilitating the conversation:

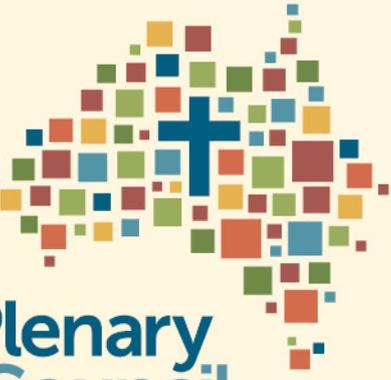
- It is advisable to ensure that groups have 4-6 people as this will enable all to have an opportunity to speak
- Have the group sitting in a circle and ensure that they are able to hear each other
- Have copies of the Listening and Dialogue guide for all participants
- Make sure that there is time for silence prior to entering the process – it is helpful for participants to still their minds
- Remember that we are inviting people to develop a habit of dialogue
- It is possible that the participants do not know each other so it is important to allow them to introduce themselves
- If the parish is hosting a large Listening and Dialogue event, it may be appropriate to have a counsellor present
- It will be important that the group have determined how they wish to submit the group responses to the Plenary Council 2020 question.
- The facilitator may, on occasion, have a challenging person in a group. It is helpful to set some ground rules at the start: it is an equal participation group so one person speaks at a time and everyone has the opportunity to speak; not interrupting etc.

#### Step 2

- It may be helpful to introduce Step 2 by reminding people that it is important we receive the responses from each other – it is not a time to correct or challenge anyone's story or response
- It may be hard to choose just one topic – but that's ok. It is highly likely that participants will enter into more than one Listening and Dialogue session

#### Step 3

- At this listening stage the facilitator may need to remind participants of the importance of listening deeply to each other's stories. Again, this is not a time to challenge – it may be appropriate to ask a question of clarification or the facilitator may wish to ask an open ended question such as *'Would you like to share a little more about how you felt when ... happened?'*



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- If there is disagreement, the facilitator may wish to just acknowledge that we come with different views but in this process all views are equally valued and valuable
- It is helpful to draw the participants' attention to the suggested opening phrases 'I feel your sharing has helped me to ...' or 'From what you have shared with me, I now understand...' because it reminds us to respond to the story we have heard from our hearts

### Step 4

- It will be important for the response to be submitted and in some cases the facilitator may be asked to do this.

Above all, let us keep in mind the words of Pope Francis:

*"Communicating means sharing, and sharing demands listening and acceptance. Listening is much more than simply hearing. Hearing is about receiving information, while listening is about communication, and calls for closeness. Listening allows us to get things right, and not simply to be passive onlookers, users or consumers. Listening also means being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good."*

(Message for World Day of Social Communications, Jan. 22, 2016)