

Para Hills Modbury Catholic Parish

Plenary Council Listening & Dialogue Sessions July 2018 – March 2019

More than 12 Listening and Dialogue sessions have been held in the Para Hills Modbury Catholic Parish. These have occurred at each of our Mass centres, Holy Trinity & St John XXIII, and have also been occurring in the homes of parishioners.

We have attempted to loosely group the questions or statements that parishioners have had for the council and have recorded the comments from a group of our youth ranging in age from 17 – 23 years separately. These comments have been recorded separately and are presented first as it is our young people who are the future of our Church.

What parishioners at Para Hills Modbury Catholic Parish have asked the Plenary Council to know that they believe God is asking of us in Australia at this time:

From Our Youth

That we be united and help each other in this very challenging time for the Church.

Selflessness; honesty and openness. Perhaps the publicity associated with the cases of abuse is in fact a blessing in disguise as it forces the Church to look at its responses and whether it has been open enough.

Inclusion of Youth in a real way – educate our children early by the parish providing more support for families and schools to educate First Communicants more fully in their faith.

Improved teaching for young people so that they are more aware of the Catholic perspective on social issues and are empowered to speak out articulately and confidently against injustice and / or immorality.

That we pray for peace in all the world

For people to be more active in their faith so that they spread God's love and the faith through their actions – not just praying, just going to church doesn't make you a Christian.

The Catholic Community adapting to modern times – eg. having The Mass available online – is a good thing but we must remember that the sacraments can't be delivered via an app – celebration of the Eucharist requires being in communion with our community.

Have pride in being a Catholic and attending Mass – don't hide what you believe – or water down Catholic values to 'fit in' with society. Be proud.

On Families & Young People

God wants us to be a Church that supports families and parents in the ongoing faith and spiritual development of their children.

God wants us to be a Church that takes on the responsibility for the continuing education of the faithful in the scriptures and in the beliefs of their religion.

The Church should devise ways of being more welcoming and less judgmental of young people and their families – understanding the complexities of families' social and work lives which can keep them from regular Mass attendance.

Making the Church relevant today when families are coping with managing conflict, bringing up 'good' kids, paying bills etc.

That we be a Church that understands the complexities of families and family life today.

Bring children up with the Catechism so that they have the basis and fundamentals of their faith

Be creative about nurturing a sense of the Sabbath on a weekly basis – especially for those families whose work commitments keep them from celebrating the Sunday Mass.

Family faith formation – eg. How to pray together as a family

Supporting a 'religious home' for families to be able to 'hand on' the sacredness of the faith.

Merge Catholic school students and parents into involvement in Parish communities to assist parents in the faith education of their children.

The Church and the celebrations in the Church should be more relevant to our young people so that they want to attend.

God wants us to pray more for the young ones who are pulling away from God.

Reconnect the young people with the Church in a modern way, with being relevant to a diverse culture and being congruent with modern science and knowledge – what is the meaning of the Scripture rather than literal interpretations of Scripture.

Tap into what youth are looking for. In liturgy, look at lay people providing sermons or providing pastoral support which is meeting the needs of the youth.

On the Leadership of the Church

We want the Church – its leaders and its people – to stand up when things are said or done that are not following the Gospel – eg. the treatment of refugees

In order to preserve the well-being of our priests and to provide them emotional support in their ministry that we allow them to marry should they choose and that we ordain women.

God wants the Church to give more power to the faithful and listen to their ideas

Listen to what grass roots people want and think in such a way that we know we are being heard and listened to.

People are cynical about whether the Church will truly listen due to prior experiences with the 'Listening Church'. How do we know we will be listened to? We want 'proof' that the Church is listening.

On Inclusivity / Community

That we become a Church that welcomes and values everyone regardless of their race, gender or age.

We should encourage greater development of community and sense of belonging to community in our Church so that people want to be involved in all aspects of Church life.

Don't be disillusioned. Do be in community – love one another as He loves us.

Acceptance and Tolerance, building community regardless of and inclusive of difference

That we understand God's love and care will reach out to all

That we be accepting of everyone – not just tolerant – remembering that Jesus was a refugee.

That we reach out to elderly members of our community who have moved into nursing homes so that they continue to feel part of our community

The Bible says to love one another, unconditionally. Yet LGBT members of the community are not accepted into the Church and are not allowed to marry. Provide a pathway for our children who may be among the LGBT to continue to be valued and experience wholehearted belonging in the Catholic Church. Australia says 'Yes'; the Church needs to project a contemporary theology that reflects the broader range of recognized sexuality. With sexual harassment and abuse from Church leaders being forgiven [criminals are forgiven], yet those who are LGBT are not accepted. More fairness is sought as are harsher penalties for those who commit crimes of sexual harassment and abuse.

That we look after each other and the environment and be accepting of diversity. Embed this into Church culture. Be proactive in the Church and not just give it lip service, especially in issues of acknowledgement of indigenous land and historical events, inclusivity of LGBTQI and equality for men and women in the Church.

That we need to create spaces and places within our Church community that allow and encourage people to share stories of faith – no opportunity for this in Mass. Soften the spaces to make them more people friendly – particularly for young families.

Contemporary Church needs people to be invited/involved differently – eg. Regular 'an afternoon with' on different topics.

That we bring people together to acknowledge different faith journeys.

On the Love of God

The Church needs to understand that God is pure love and we should listen to the voice of God who speaks to us as a friend and a child.

God wants the Church to have direction and to move forward in love – to embrace change.

God wants us to understand that He is a God of peace and that He wants us to live in peace

On the Role of women in Church

Why are women not encouraged to have a pathway to authentic leadership in the Church, including a road to priesthood? Currently the Church is missing out on or not utilizing a huge reservoir of different wisdom, experiences and thinking. The Church needs to understand that the Holy Spirit is also acting through women.

Women should be included in all levels of Church decision making.

Bring women into leadership roles in the Church and recognize their wisdom and experience are gifts of the Spirit.

How can we encourage and include women into leadership in the upper echelons of the Church?

Remove 'gender' from the leadership / ministry structures of the Church.

Church is sexist and hence irrelevant to many of today's young people – males in power only – today's young people don't accept these gender structures.

Language is powerful – don't use gender to refer to God – excludes half the population – acknowledge that God is beyond human understanding.

On the Sacraments

Have Sacramental formation for children when families come and request it, not as advertised by the parish.

That we protect the sacramentality of the sacraments.

That we reconsider the age of reception of Sacraments – many children, even following the education/instruction in the sacramental program are too young to understand what they are committing themselves to – ie too young for confirmation.

That we not lose the richness of the sacrament of Reconciliation – repairing one's relationship with God, being forgiven and forgiving ourselves – this is being lost because people won't go to 1st Rite Confession – bring back the 3^d Rite

On Spiritual / Faith Development

That we take time out: to pray; to meditate; for the awareness of others; to BE the face of Jesus To the face of Jesus.

The Church should encourage more prayer groups and serious Bible study.

Make the Church more relevant to today's Australian society. For example, up to date adult faith education; marriage of divorced people.

Teaching and Supporting the growth in relationship with Jesus

On our Faith in practice – a visual Church

We should be a vibrant Church that presents the faithful with a sense of hope in the future in these constantly changing times.

That our faith not be just a part of our life but that it be fluid, flowing, absorbed and integrated in our life. That our faith is not juxtaposed to life.

Be bold as Christians

Take the Church to the streets – processions in the streets, Lenten, feast days etc – keep the community together – show who we are and what we believe.

To resist, to be bold in the face of adversity – ie. Faith in practice.

On Ecumenism

That we be more open to the reunification of the Christian Churches – losing the language of division and recognizing that the Holy Spirit does not belong only to the Catholic Church.

God wants us to move the Christian churches together – to look more at how we are the same rather than how we are different.

That we accept that all wisdom, truth and knowledge of God and the path to God does not reside solely in the Catholic Church.

On General Matters

Acknowledge that there are so many good people in the Church.

Address that people are disillusioned with the Church.

Why have we lost the prayer about Satan and his wiles from the end of the Mass?

God wants us to protect the universality of the Church. How much can the Church in Australia change before we lose the essence of who we are?

Be honest and take responsibility for past hurt that has been associated with the Catholic Church.

The language of the Mass is often not the language of real people – we assume that everyone understands, but some things we say might just as well still be in Latin. Use real language that can be understood by the common person.

That we as a Church be open to and welcome whatever the Spirit brings.

We seem to have become a Church that is content to simply serve the needs of the current dwindling Catholic population. We have missed the message that true followers of Christ will be evangelisers.