

Submission to the Plenary Council February 2020 From Teams Movement (Equipes Notre-Dame)

A joyful, hope-filled and servant community

The preamble to this discernment speaks of the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that pervades our world. Yet hope does persist amongst the Faithful. Pope Francis begins his exhortation to young people with: "Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!" (Christus Vivit ; 1, 2019).

We recommend locally that

1. Each parish has an active ministry to the poor, the sick and the elderly.
2. Each parish works with the recommended liturgy group to develop a truly hospitable, family atmosphere that welcomes 'the stranger' and celebrates the eucharist each Sunday with vibrant music and joy.
3. Families and groups are encouraged to assist and lead in the preparation of liturgies to reflect their traditions.

A joyful, hope-filled and servant community

The preamble to this discernment speaks of the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that pervades our world.

We recommend nationally that

1. The Australian Bishops' Conference consider the pervasive low morale within the Australian Church and invite Pope Francis to visit and participate in the second-round consultations of the Council in 2021 in Sydney. This would enable the announcement and implementation of a substantial act of humble and meaningful contrition and reparation for victims of sexual abuse
2. A renewed and strengthened media office is created to coordinate and lead the network of parish groups pertaining to marriage and family, liturgy and the formation of the faithful.
3. The Australian Bishops' Conference create study groups of experts to consider ways of addressing the systemic issues of the secularization of our society and the deterioration of public, commercial and political ethics. Catechesis of our society is needed.

Humble, healing and merciful

In 2015 Pope Francis insisted that married couples be missionary to other married couples and families, especially to “wounded families”. We note the high incidence of domestic violence in Australia. This requires the transformation of parishes to have a specific focus for leadership in this ministry.

It is recommended locally that

1. By Advent 2022 every parish will have established one new small group belonging to a movement for marriage and family life which will support marriage and family formation programs in parishes and schools.
2. Parishes document the diversity of Catholic, cultural traditions amongst parishioners and create opportunities for inclusion and learning from them as they share their faith journeys, particularly during Advent and Lent.
3. St Vincent de Paul, Knights and CWL contact other Churches to dialogue about the needs locally, with a view to possible collective activities of mercy and healing that could be provided jointly to those in need.

Humble, healing and merciful

In 2015 Pope Francis insisted that married couples be missionary to other married couples and families, especially to “wounded families”. We note the high incidence of domestic violence in Australia.

It is recommended nationally that

1. The ACBC responds more humbly to the victims of sexual abuse and restore the lost credibility of the Catholic Church. A substantial act of humble and meaningful reparation is required if Australian people are to be open again to the message of Jesus.
2. Church instruments and structures of mercy and healing be celebrated publicly.
3. Dialogue with other Christian welfare organisations be undertaken to counter governments using their funding grants to increase competition between organisations and to reduce real levels of funding for services to disadvantaged families and individuals.
4. That the third rite of reconciliation be re-introduced as part of the everyday life of the Church in Australia.

Inclusive, participatory and synodal:

In families all members have the right to be included, listened to and participate in setting goals and steering their journey. These characteristics should be the norm in the Church and experienced by all.

It is recommended locally that

1. Every parish has an effective Parish Pastoral Council (PPC).
2. Parishes initiate a program of renewal, requiring a parish renewal team to report to the PPC.
3. Opportunities for ecumenical dialogue be sought:
 - by participating in local Ministers' Fraternal or similar group
 - by having a subcommittee of the PPC to open dialogue with other Christian Churches focused on areas of common interest and local action.
4. Adult formation opportunities are created around collaborative ministry with the PPC and natural leaders in parishes who gather around themselves charitable works and programs as a part of a Parish Leadership Team.

Inclusive, participatory and synodal:

In families all members have the right to be included, listened to and participate in setting goals and steering their journey. Teams see it as the required norm for these characteristics of Church to be seen and experienced by all.

It is recommended nationally that

1. Governance structures in the Church be examined and a role be discerned for lay women and men in the governance of dioceses and parishes, as well as the selection of Church leadership.
2. Every diocese have an effective Diocesan Pastoral Council.
3. Increased importance be allocated to work with other Christian Churches and other Faith traditions, particularly in the welfare areas.
4. A program for the Renewal of the Church, like that developed in the Adelaide Archdiocese, underpinned by the eight characteristics of renewal discerned by Dr Dennis Edwards (recently deceased) be initiated at the diocesan and parish level.

Missionary and evangelising:

Pope Francis in his 2015 address to the international marriage movement, Teams of our Lady (Equipes Notre Dame) challenged married couples to be missionary to other families, to be outward reaching. His post synodal apostolic exhortation in March 2016 'Amoris Laetitia' is an excellent guideline to what the Church should be doing to support married couples and families. And yet we cannot identify any initiatives by the Australian Church to put this guideline into action.

Part of evangelization today is to have a clear and unambiguous message. The model of the Christian Church as that of "a loving family" is such a message.

We recommend that the Australian Bishops Conference:

1. Adopt the Family Model of Church as its missionary message.
2. Encourage and support the establishment of small group movements such as Teams in each diocese and parish
3. Make the 'The Joy of Love' by Pope Francis the Church's blueprint for action on marriage and family.

Open to conversion, renewal and reform

The greatest need for conversion is for the development of a Church that welcomes people, without exception or censure. Such a Church is a loving community where communal effort and power and decision-making are shared. Pope Francis has provided a template for renewal in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

It is recommended locally that

1. Parishes adopt a conjoint planning process with the Parish Priest annually at a planning retreat where discernment on issues of renewal is the central focus and an action plan to bring this about is developed.
2. Resources are allocated to the formation of the laity so that they are properly equipped to take on leadership responsibilities.
3. A program of renewal be initiated in each parish along the lines of the 8 characteristics of renewal as defined by the late Dr Dennis Edwards for the Adelaide archdiocese.

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It is recommended nationally that

1. The ACBC initiate a national renewal program in Australian dioceses, based upon the 8 characteristics of renewal as defined by the late Dr Dennis Edwards for the Adelaide archdiocese.
2. The ordination of married men and the re-activation of the ministry for priests who have married be seriously considered.
3. Ordination for women candidates for the diaconate be seriously considered.
4. Barriers to the ordination of women be an focus for study and recommendation to the ACBC in due course.
5. That *Evangelii Gaudium* be nominated as the study topic for all diocesan Lenten programs in 2021.
6. That the laity be involved in the selection and appointments of Bishops and Pastors.

Prayerful and Eucharistic

Teams know what it is to teach children to pray at a mother's knee and at mealtimes. This is crucial to us being a prayerful and Eucharistic Church.

It is recommended locally that

1. Prayerful reflection be encouraged and parents be offered opportunities to learn about teaching children and young adults to reflect, discern and pray.
2. Each parish be required to establish a liturgy group so that the formation of rich Eucharistic Communities can emerge more strongly around a weekly Eucharist that is welcoming, inclusive, joyful and hopeful; and that it is a sacred time to discover and connect with Our God. Reflection and formation for this is crucial.
3. The value of small group experiences in the formation of all Christians to be a prayerful people is recognised by every parish and efforts are made to provide such experiences to give all children opportunities for such ongoing experiences, particularly during adolescence.

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It is recommended nationally that

1. The ACBC establish dialogue with scientists and other faith traditions to learn about the spirituality of our age in order to gain insights as to how the message of Jesus applies in our current society.
2. An e-network of parish-based couples and family groups be established and become subscribers to the Cathkids program within the Catholic Family Resource Centre and receive resources for use in the home and in Catholic schools.
3. Each diocese conducts an audit of the opportunities for small group experiences within the context of faith formation across the life cycle. The active promotion by Bishops to establish new groups within marriage and family focused organisations such as Teams, Marriage Encounter and Couples for Christ should follow.