



# The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER



10-10-21

Dear sisters, brothers and friends in the Passionist Family

## Plenary Council - First Assembly

Last evening at 6.00pm, Archbishop Tom Costello (Perth) declared the Assembly of the Plenary 'adjourned' till we reconvene in June on the last session of our 8-day Assembly.

What a great week it was. I believe the Church in Australia shifted this past week. The common voice heard loud and clear that we have to be better and do better, and we have to do it together. We all listened to the passion, commitment and faith of such a total cross section of the Australian church – covering every possible demographic. But, every one focused so completely on trying to listen respectfully and work collaboratively for a church totally ChristCentered to make for the sake of mission .

Everyone tried to not let their own concerns or views prevent their listening for the 'whisper of the Spirit'. Well, the Spirit certainly wasn't listening. The Spirit didn't tell us exactly how to do what we wanted, but the Spirit certainly is sending us in the right direction. We heard so frequently: *We are not the Kingdom, we are not Treasure. It's only about us so we can be there to do what we can so that the world can become the Kingdom.*

The Plenary Council was a model of a synodal church working together – which is what 220,000 people who spoke out during the listening process asked for; which is what so many in the Church have been hanging on by their finger tips hoping for. It wasn't perfect, far from it. But something shifted this past week, to give us some real confidence going forward.

Synodality and co-responsibility, the full role of women in governance were front and centre. Equally so was the desire to respond to those wounded by the Church, the survivors and victims of sexual abuse, the wounds inflicted on our First Nations peoples, and the earth, wounds inflicted by misuse of power and authority.

Thursday was a special day set aside as a day of Sorrow and Lament. From the beginning of prayer that morning, you could feel the whole assembly had moved into a deep and vulnerable space. The interventions here were heart

breaking. This was deepened by the news this week of over 200,000 children abused in France. Abuse on an industrial level as one person shared. I found very moving the sense we had that we, as Church, carry responsibility for this guilt. A significant part of the day we spent in our own personal prayer.

Though adjourned last night as an assembly, the Plenary Council's work will continue for the next 7 months. We will be processing the priorities, goals, requests for information about what is canonically possible. We recognized that our own Aussie journey for a synodal co-responsible Church will now be part of the whole Church's preparation for the Rome Synod on Synodality in 2023.

### **Some Plenary Asides**

It was a delight to see Tom Warren from our Passionist Youth Retreat team present as a member of the Council. Tom gave a very strong and passionate intervention for a better healthier Church. What a great young Passionist he is.

Also present on the Council was Gabriel Turche. Gabriele is the religious Education Coordinator at Casimir College, our parish high school in Marrickville. Gabriele, married and a father of nine, also spoke passionately of the vocation of the family, and of marriage as a proclamation of God's love without underplaying the challenges young couples face or the marriages that fail. How can we prepare and support couples better for this primary sacrament they are for the Church?

It was a privilege for me on Saturday, the final day of the Synod to be chairperson for the Plenary Session. I don't know how my name came to be presented as one of the five chairs for this assembly and the next. However, since the session was being streamed live, I made sure I wore my Passionist Pullover, with our beloved Sign well and truly up front.

In Christ Crucified

**Tom cp**

Provincial Superior