



BAPTISM AS THE CATALYST FOR LIFE

AND PLENARY 2020

A CALL FOR FURTHER FORMATION AND CO RESPONSIBILITY

Pentecost Sunday 2019 marks the beginning of the second phase of the Plenary Council: **Listening and Discernment**. The national themes, announced at Pentecost (9 June 2019) emerge from the first phase of the Plenary Council (Listening and Dialogue), where we shared our vision for the Australian Church. These themes will become the focus for the second phase (Listening and Discernment), laying the foundations for both the ongoing participation of individuals, groups, parishes and the development of the Plenary Council agenda. More updates can be accessed at <http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/>

While we await with anticipation the announcement of the national themes, the Archdiocese has listened to what people in our own diocese have said. We have heard and noted the desire for clearer, more detailed faith formation, more fulfilling prayer lives and greater emphasis on the Sacraments. We have also heard the call to further dialogue and deeper engagement of the laity and clergy in sharing responsibility, which some refer to as co responsibility. Vatican II made it clear that by reason of baptism, the faithful have a right and duty to participate in the life and mission of the Church.

How?

The first step is to recognise the necessity to nurture our faith and grow spiritually, by seeking ways to enrich our own formation and enable a personal encounter with Jesus. This can be the catalyst to opening our minds

and hearts to the mission of Jesus and the Church. It is the co responsibility of the clergy and the laity working together to discern and act to support the particular spiritual needs of the faithful in their communities.

This can start with dialogue about renewal and revitalising our faith with one other person, then perhaps many others - our families, parishes and communities.

It's Time:

It is an opportune time for parishes and other communities to implement a focus on the foundational role of Baptism in our lives. Over the next few months as individuals, families and parish communities let's put the spotlight on the sacrament of Baptism to refocus on who we are as Christians and what we are called to be as a community.

A Catalyst:

Prayerful reflection on baptism can provide a catalyst for all Christians to grow in their faith journey, reinvigorating individuals, parishes and communities. It can stimulate Christians to demonstrate their sharing of the life of Christ and sustain them as they respond with humility, courage, compassion and love to the extraordinary challenges the Church currently faces. We are being called to discern the meaning of our own Baptism in our life, how it has changed us and how it influences us in living Christ's mission in our homes, workplaces and communities

A Reflection on Baptism

Sent on Christ's Mission?

Most Catholics do not remember the day of their Baptism, even though it was the most important day of their lives. It was the day on which we were formally initiated into the Church and received the gift of sanctifying grace, becoming God's adopted children because of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the sacramental rite, soon after the Baptism itself, the priest touches the ears and mouth of the new Christian and utters the word "Ephphetha", the same Aramaic word which Jesus used when healing a man who was deaf and mute (Mark 7.34). The prayer that follows asks God to touch the ears of the newly baptised to receive his word, and to touch the mouth in order that the new Christian proclaim the blessings and peace that come from placing one's faith in Christ.

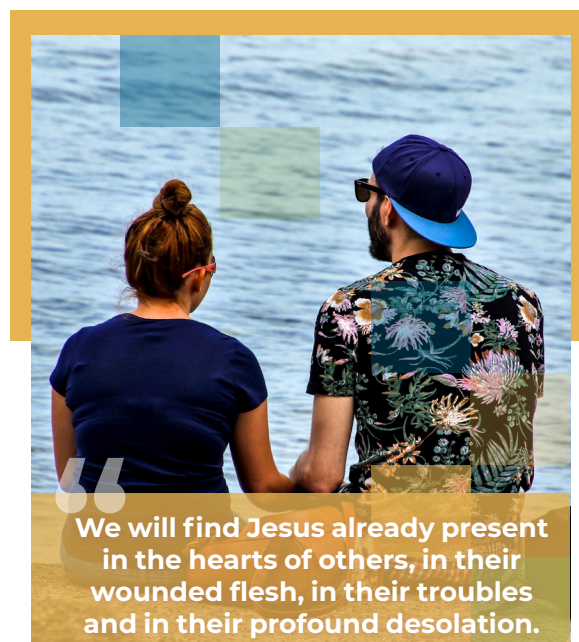
Baptism: Commitment, Contribution and Co responsibility

Thinking about our baptism reminds us that as members of the Church we each have a responsibility to contribute to the life and mission of the Church. However, the influence of the secularised culture surrounding us can dampen our sense of Christian commitment, undermining the empowering call of our baptism. In fact the baptism of children in our families can become more an occasion to celebrate with a party, rather than a reminder to all of us that by baptism we become the People of God and must take our part in Christ's mission. Without a commitment to live the gospel as best we can in our everyday lives, there is a danger that hypocrisy can infect our participation in the liturgy.¹ This danger suggests that we would do well

to ask ourselves: Do we recognise that in the sacraments we are formed as Christ's disciples and sent on His mission? Are we actually living our baptism with pure intention in our every day lives? Are we doing all we can be doing as members of the Body of Christ?

Are we ready?

Pope Francis has called upon all Catholics to be mindful of their missionary vocation. He speaks with prophetic vision and pastoral compassion, as part of his call to the faithful to evangelise joyfully and to live with integrity. In committing ourselves to our vocation to serve others, the Pope reminds us that we will find Jesus already present in the hearts of others, "in their wounded flesh, in their troubles and in their profound desolation." (*Gaudete et exultate*, 135). We must ask whether we are sufficiently aware of this vocation and committed to the task of living it courageously and generously. The questions below are designed to facilitate reflection and active response to our baptismal call.



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¹ Br. Julian McDonald cfc makes these points in "The Baptism of Jesus – a reflection on the Readings". <http://catalystforrenewal.org.au/sunday-readings-reflection/the-baptism-of-jesus-a-reflection-on-the-readings/>. Accessed 16.04.2019

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Why is Baptism important?
- 2 What's currently being done to help Catholics in your parish live their Baptism? How can we build on this and respond to the call to leadership and service within the parish community?
- 3 What might be needed in our parishes to guide us in living the life of Christ in our daily lives: at work, at study, in our families, with friends and in all our activities?

ACTION

- Pray together using the simple prayer provided.
- In prayer and other groups that are active in parishes, draw on the reflection above and discuss living our Baptism with open hearts.
- Conclude with personal prayer and reflective music.
- The Parish Pastoral Council together with the liturgy and sacramental teams, may wish to invite the parish community to come together to pray and discern living our Baptism in contemporary Australia today.
- The ideas generated during reflection and discussion could be provided to the Parish Pastoral Council, liturgical and sacramental teams to consider.

PRAYER

Loving Father open our hearts to hidden realities, to:

- your boundless mercy and love for all people.
- your unfailing presence in the community.
- your call to justice and peace.

May the sacraments stir in us that same love for those with whom we worship and all members of our human family. May the sacraments move us to engage in love-inspired action that transforms ourselves and the world.

Amen. ²

Links To Useful Resources



1

AMAZING PARISH

Resources for building vital and vibrant parish communities with one of the building blocks centred on prayer and the sacraments

- <https://amazingparish.org/get-started/>
- <https://amazingparish.org/building-blocks-resources/#1468944328742-8e753c87-b028>

2

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Brochure on Sacraments and Social Mission (Baptism section)

- www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/upload/sacraments-and-social-mission-book.pdf
- www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/upload/baptism-handout.pdf

3

WE ARE SALT AND LIFE – PRAY TOGETHER

- www.wearesaltandlight.org/pray-together?tab=jl_magic_tabs_prayer_gix1

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www.sydneycatholic.org/about-us/plenary-council-2020



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Plenary Council 2020
'Listen to what the Spirit is saying...' REV 2:7