Reflection Time for Delegates

On February 20 the Sydney domiciled delegates to the Plenary Council gathered at Villa Maria Hunters Hill to engage in prayerful reflection in preparation for their role as delegates to the Council. Fr Aloysius Rego, a Discalced Carmelite, skilfully lead the group in the morning session through the meaning of the cross in the lives of Christians. He drew from the writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross and made them relevant to those present. Delegates were asked to reflect on questions inspired by saints such as "Saint Teresa of Avila" who told us the "the measure of being willing to bear a small or large cross is love". Delegates were asked:

"How open and willing are you to invest yourself in the Plenary Council?"

"What are the attitudes, fears, compromises in yourself that prevent you from fully embracing the cross of discipleship as you participate in the Plenary Council?"

The afternoon session was a reflection on Listening and Fr. Rego provided excellent examples of the need to listen as a service to others. Quoting Lawrence Freeman, he argued that "the point of dialogue with those you love and respect is not to convince them but to listen. The greatest changes are wrought through listening. This is what Mary did…". The need for listening is of greater service than speaking. All too often the Church has assumed that the Spirit will lead us to the complete truth (Jn16:13). This has led to the assumption that we have the truth and have no need to listen to dissident or marginalised voices. These were the ones to whom Jesus listened and with whom He was involved.

Delegates expressed their appreciation of having the opportunity to come together for this time of reflection.

Instrumentum Laboris

The Instrumentum Laboris working document (now called "Continuing our Journey") has been sent out and will be available for use within parishes. It is available on the Plenary Council Website and is accompanied by a reflection guide. It is anticipated that parishes will be involved in reflection on this document using the reflection guide. We anticipate reengaging with the ambassadors and organising monthly reflection groups in the parishes after Pentecost.

There are a series of podcasts available on the Plenary Council website of 10-13 minutes designed to engage the whole Catholic community in the process as it is a process intended to engage the whole church.

Assembly 1-Multi modal platform

The First Assembly will be held from October 3 to October 9, 2021 and the second assembly will be face to face in Sydney from July 4 to July 9, 2022. In preparation for the Assemblies a National Conference Director, Danielle, has been appointed to work with the local event coordinators in each hub.

Regional hubs will be formed so that Covid requirements can be adhered to and as a precaution if there should be another outbreak. The bishops are to determine the makeup and size of the hubs in their Provincial meetings in March. The hubs in NSW and Victoria will include the Eastern churches, Personal Prelatures, Militiary Ordinariate, church agencies and leaders from religious congregations.

In preparation for the Assembly there will be a five-month period of prayer for the success of the Assembly. It is hoped that this could be launched on Pentecost Sunday.

Formation for delegates (now known as members) has been arranged by the National Team with a choice of four dates in June and July. We anticipate that a further retreat will be held for our Sydney delegates in September.

Next steps

The Archdiocese of Sydney will arrange a short retreat for parish ambassadors and others who assisted in the earlier phases of the Plenary Council process as we move into this new phase of preparation.

Information will be provided to parishes regarding the reengagement in the Plenary process.

When the Plenary prayers are revitalised parishes should encourage people to use them.

Bishop Terry Brady and Professor Sandra Lynch

Co Chairs Sydney Plenary Council Working Group