

Plenary Council listening to 222,000 voices

An Article from Catholic News, March 29 2019.



Lana Turvey-Collins addresses high school students in Western Australia during the Plenary Council's Listening and Dialogue phase (Catholic Education Western Australia)

Plenary Council 2020 president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB says he and his fellow bishops have been “amazed” by the engagement of Australians in the Council’s opening stage. Source: *ACBC Media Blog*.

The Plenary Council’s Listening and Dialogue phase ended earlier this month, concluding a period of almost 10 months for people to share their stories and consider the question “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?”

The National Centre for Pastoral Research has compiled statistical data and reported that more than 222,000 people participated in the Listening and Dialogue phase and made either individual submissions or had their voices captured through a group response.

“The bishops knew the time was ripe for a defining moment in the life of the Church like a Plenary Council. What we didn’t know is how the people of Australia would embrace a process that hasn’t taken place for more than 80 years,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“We have been thrilled and amazed by the generosity of people and their willingness to speak about their experiences within the Church – both positive and negative – and to invest such energy in this first stage of the process.”

Plenary Council facilitator Lana Turvey-Collins said while she observed enthusiasm for the Council when she visited communities across Australia, she couldn’t have predicted that would translate into 220,000 people participating in the Listening and Dialogue phase.

“From the beginning, it has been clear that the success of the Council would depend largely on people’s level of engagement, but equally on the movement of the Holy Spirit,” she said.

“This unprecedented – and quite overwhelming – level of response shows the people of God in Australia are deeply interested in shaping the future of the Catholic Church in this country.”

National Centre for Pastoral Research director Trudy Dantis said the process of analysing the more than 17,000 individual and group submissions is under way. It will be completed over the next two months, with the national themes for discernment that have emerged to be announced in early June.

“Each submission will be read and analysed by our team of research experts and we will use some of the best research tools available to assist that analysis,” Dr Dantis said.

“Prayer and discernment is at the core of this process, particularly in this next stage of the journey, ensuring the Plenary Council is guided by the Holy Spirit.”