

Continuing the Discernment toward the Plenary Council – “Inclusive, Participatory & Synodal?”



“Inclusive” In the context of the Catholic faith, the touchstone of inclusion is Jesus Christ, who at the Last Supper prayed for all to be one, as God is one.¹ He includes people who have faith in him. He tells them they are never far from the Kingdom of God.² He seeks people out to visit their homes.³ He includes people in a personal way: they touch his garment, He takes them by the hand. Christ rose above the taboos of his time, welcoming and helping those who were outcasts in their society on the basis of sickness,⁴ poverty⁵ or sin.⁶ He repeatedly called on his followers to welcome the poor, disabled and sick, to provide for their needs.⁷ He welcomed women among those he taught,⁸ looked

past the social blindness of his time to see the depth of their faith,⁹ and welcomed their support of him in his ministry.¹⁰ He welcomed the simple faith and love of children and called his followers to do the same, and to strive to emulate their faith.¹¹ Christ repeatedly refused to condemn people, even where their wrongdoing offended everyone around him,¹² but instead called these into his fold, giving them an opportunity to start again. In some cases, Christ stepped in to defend a person that others wished to condemn. Following in the footsteps of Christ, the apostles called on Christians to “welcome one another as Christ welcomed you”,¹³ to welcome strangers,¹⁴ not to exclude or have different standards of admission on the basis of wealth,¹⁵ social standing or sex,¹⁶ of gifts and talents,¹⁷ but to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”¹⁸ The Church, founded by Jesus Christ, is a forum of welcome to “the great multitude from every tribe, tongue and nation”.¹⁹ This biblical image invites us to imagine anew the ways in which the diversity of unique gifts can contribute to an organic and authentic common building of the Church. This is especially crucial in Australia, where the Church is manifest in the great multitude of ecclesial expressions from East and West. The words that St John Paul II spoke particularly to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may be applied to all Catholics in Australia: “the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”²⁰ Some experience exclusion, isolation and even homelessness due to cultural differences, personal characteristics or life circumstances. An inclusive Church begins by listening and with humility, with self-examination and conversion. A Christ-centred Church is inclusive of persons rather than of ideologies. Inclusion entails more than solidarity and accompaniment, which are grounded in creation and basic humanity. Inclusion recognises that every person is a doorway into the mystery that is the Body of Christ. A well-meaning effort to be inclusive of one group should not result in the exclusion of another person or group.

(The reflections continue in the full document here:

<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PC2020-thematic-papers-2-single-page-ver.pdf>