



# **Infant Jesus Parish**

## **Communal Discernment**

### **Responses**

#### **To the Six National Themes**

People from Morley Parish in the Archdiocese of Perth met monthly to pray and discern the way forward for the Church in Australia. Our meetings had 20 people in attendance.

The following are our responses to the questions that were asked of us.

### **How is God Calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is missionary and evangelising?**

We are in a change of era. To return to the recent past is to abandon hope. We need to use evangelising programmes like Alpha to give people an experience of Christ and of belonging to the local church that helps bring about conversion, commitment and enthusiasm. We need to be truly welcoming communities: this affects how and on what we preach: our openness to people who are different- the disabled, LGBT, divorced and remarried, aboriginal people etc. Disciple-making should be the Church's top priority. Parishioners need to be educated to understand and live their faith in our culture. We need to move beyond clericalism: those baptised with the charism of preaching should exercise this ministry not just the clergy. We need lay and clerical evangelists who can communicate well in our culture. Importing priests to maintain the status quo has been problematic.

### **How is God calling us to be a Christ centred Church that is inclusive, participatory and synodal?**

Synodality is a new concept for us. So, we need practice over time to learn how to discern to get its full richness. We must begin locally and then at diocesan and national levels with pastoral councils and regular synods. Pastoral councils should be obligatory at every level. The Plenary Council needs to be continued in a biannual National Pastoral Council which should include women and laity. National Synods need to be held every five years. Governance structures must be inclusive of women and laity and need to be transparent and accountable. Councils of Priests and Colleges of Consultors which are purely presbyteral, or clerical belong to another time and ecclesiology. Faith communities need to be welcoming to all people irrespective of their race, gender, personal history or sexual orientation. Women must be recognised and valued in all ministries.

### **How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is prayerful and eucharistic?**

The Eucharist makes us Catholic. It causes us to remember, and to be grateful for the gifts God has given us in Christ and through the Spirit. The celebration of the Eucharist must be the community at its best: joyful, prayerful, reflective and

inspiring. Our communion with Christ is joined to our mission as the body of Christ when we are sent forth into the world. The charisms and gifts of the whole community must be welcomed used in our celebration. The priest is more of a conductor not the sole player of every instrument in the band. Our life of faith and prayer is nourished by Scripture, the Liturgy and our own experience of the life we have been given. Opportunities for growth in contemplative prayer, lectio divina and meditation should be encouraged.

### **How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is humble, healing and merciful?**

Pastoral leaders need to be free of administrative burdens so they can be free to share life and listen to ordinary people. Titles of respect (Your Grace) and special dress (e.g. mitres, zucchetos, mozettas) are counterproductive. They create distance not closeness and tend to promote lecturing (the church teaches...) not the conversation of friends. Bishops and priests need to be pastorally supported with skilled assistance in their ministries. They all need to be periodically accountable to their people. If they are not up to the job their honourable retirements should be offered and accepted. All ministry is a service of healing, communication and mercy. It is an embodiment of God's love. We need to move from a sense of imposing unchanging "natural law" to setting people free to live in the Gospel in relationships of love. We need to promote the ministry and governance roles of women in the church.

### **How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is a joyful, hope-filled and servant community?**

The one thing the Church in Australia has going for it is Jesus and the God he reveals. We can be joyful if we have personally experienced the abundance of God's grace in Christ, through the Spirit. We are called to live in a joyful community of love with the mission of proclaiming and helping to bring about the reign of God in Australia. Gratitude for the gifts we have received opens us to hope. Right now, we are between stories. The old clerical story of the Church in Australia has died and there is a new story waiting to be born. In the meantime, there is chaos. Once we leave the old behind there will be a new, more colourful story with fruitful diversity through the gifts of the Spirit. We need to believe the Good News has a future in Australia. If it does, then the Church in Australia has a future.

## **How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is open to conversion, renewal and reform?**

Many Australians especially women, and young people have walked away from the church. Our situation is dire. We need a new imagination of what it means to be a Catholic Christian at this time in Australia. We need new saints leading the way and inspiring us in our parishes and dioceses. Pope Francis invites us to see and understand the church and its mission in a new way. So, we need to renounce what does not communicate or create space for the Spirit. We need to change by returning to the sources of new life. We need to pray for our own conversion from being passive recipients to being fruitful contributors, for the conversion of the bishops from being defensive managers of decline to being prophetic inspirers of the new; for the conversion of the priests who think they are the parish. The church must receive the gifts of the laity, especially women, for the church to be renewed and reformed.