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NEWSLETTER, MARCH 2019

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EDITORIAL

Getting back on Mission

Abstract

(abstract of submission to Plenary Council - full submission available below)

Today Catholics for Renewal publishes its 146-page submission to the Plenary Council 2020/2021, titled "Getting back on mission". The submission outlines a vision for the renewal of the Catholic Church in Australia at a time of unprecedented challenges.

The Church in Australia went 'off mission' because its leaders collectively lost sight of its very purpose: "the Church, inspired by no earthly ambition, seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit" (Gaudium et Spes, n. 3).

Work of Christ



Painting: On the right track, Ruth Palmer

The mission of Christ and his followers is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and making it a reality on earth. It is the ongoing mission of the People of God. Catholics for Renewal believes that for too long the Church in Australia has been 'off mission' and that now we, the People of God - men and women - must urgently get back to doing what we are meant to do - carry forward the work of Christ. God's mission and the Kingdom of God must be the priority focus of the Plenary Council 2020/2021.

Counter-signs

The Kingdom of God is one of Justice, Peace, Truth, Freedom, Equality and Love. The Church in Australia is meant to be the sign of that Kingdom. Instead it currently finds itself in a huge existential crisis. Indications everywhere, particularly the scandalous tolerance and protection of clerical child sexual abusers by Catholic bishops, point to a Church which is no longer such a sign. In fact, in many ways, it is now a counter-sign of the Kingdom, and major causes of this have been its clericalist nature, exclusion of many - particularly women - and dysfunctional governance. Many Catholics and young people have responded to this shift by leaving the Church.

Good church governance demands that bishops listen to the *sensus fidei* (the sense of faith) of Christ's faithful and put in place the proper canonical structures for this: diocesan councils, diocesan synods and assemblies, diocesan and parish pastoral councils. Until these are established in every diocese, without exception, dysfunctional governance will continue.

Vatican II wanted the Church's governance to be collegial, synodal, co-responsible, and in accord with the principle of subsidiarity – recognizing the "whole people's supernatural discernment". In Australia, little notice has been taken of any part of that call. Bishops have continued to operate as independent monarchs, avoided synods, refused to establish the needed structures for effective co-responsibility, and routinely requested Rome to make decisions that should have been taken locally.

The Church in Australia will remain dysfunctional until the key elements of good governance are in place: accountability, transparency, and inclusion. Similarly until the equality of women is recognised and accepted, the culture of clericalism and secrecy uprooted, and bishops become accountable to their people, the Church in Australia will never be the sign

of the Kingdom.

Much of the dysfunction also stems from the pervasive and pernicious culture and mindset of 'clericalism'. It flourishes within the clergy and is reinforced by a laity conditioned to defer to the clergy and to accept subservience. Clericalism has to be eradicated.

Vatican II also identified the fundamental rights and duties of Catholics, yet most Catholics are unaware of them. To ensure they become aware, Catholics for Renewal is recommending the preparation of a 'Charter of Rights and Responsibilities' for the Australian faithful, a proposal originally initiated by Pope Saint Paul VI.

Significant failings and deficiencies in ministry are also holding back God's mission and the building of the Kingdom of God. We have sought to identify these and to recommend change.

Graced Opportunity

Reflecting a widely held view we are appalled by the crisis which has befallen the Church in Australia, and challenged by its enormity. At the same time we are not without hope for Church renewal, believing that whenever we gather as People of God, Christ is among us and the Spirit stirs.

Catholics for Renewal believes that the Plenary Council 2020/2021 is a graced opportunity to renew the Church in Australia. We have gladly accepted our responsibility to make some contribution towards that opportunity via this **SUBMISSION**.



Saatchi Art Artist Soo Beng Lim, New Media

Sydney-based supporters of Catholics for Renewal

We have had a number of enquiries from Sydney-based supporters regarding possible meetings of like-minded people in the Sydney area. Michael Gill, who lives in North Sydney, has been actively seeking renewal of the Church for some years and has contributed to the work of Catholics for Renewal and the Australian

Catholic Coalition for Church Reform. Michael would be pleased to hear from Sydney-based Catholics seeking renewal of the Church. Michael can be contacted at: mjg60@internode.on.net



The following recent Catholics For Renewal website News & Opinion items provide a snapshot of current Church issues and may be accessed [HERE](#)
** Note that publication of links to these items does not necessarily indicate editorial support.*

Church in Melbourne looks to St Patrick to rebuild

Church reforms under influence of forces that may appear adverse

Leading Benedictine nun in Germany calls for women priests

French bishop backs ordination of married men

Canberra Catholics lay out church reform agenda.

Action flows from child protection summit

(US) Catholics question Church commitment in wake of abuse crisis

Curia marks Pope's sixth year in office

NZ Cardinal confirms, no one to appoint as Parish Priest

Cardinal Pell is sentenced to 6 years in prison for child sex abuse

Students ask bishops to keep the faith

Why Stay?

Australian Catholics take stock as Pell falls

Listening and dialogue 'landmark moment' for church

French Cardinal Barbarin resigns after conviction for abuse cover-up

Renown reformer: 'Church has 5 years for a complete turnaround or it's over'

New laws to force priests to report abuse confessions?

Vatican summit on the protection of minors is over. What's next?

Pell conviction blows apart bishops' mantra

Statement from Archbishop Mark Coleridge, President of ACBC

Archbishop Comensoli's statement on Cardinal Pell trial

George Pell has fallen, but the cardinal's legacy casts a long shadow

Roma locuta? Ecclesiology of the Vatican summit on sexual abuse

Vatican Summit

Truth and justice after the Pell verdict

Catholicism's Year from Hell

Catholic Church leaders launch reform process

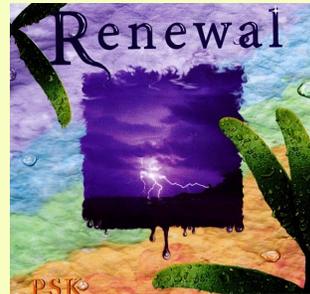
Pope Francis calls for an 'all-out battle' against the evil of sexual abuse

'We are our own worst enemy', Australian archbishop tells Pope

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DONATIONS ***HERE*** please to help support our voluntary, intensive and mostly self-funded ongoing work

(thanks to those who have responded)

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