

The 2020/21 Plenary: Who is accompanying whom?

April 2018

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has proven to be a catalyst for a fundamental reappraisal not only of the bishops' performance (governance) but of their office as ordained leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia. The Royal Commission has been wound up and its raft of recommendations have been made public. The Truth, Justice and Healing Council has prepared a report on them for the bishops.

It's time for the bishops to put into action their public commitment to transparency, accountability and release this report so that the Catholic people will have the opportunity to assess it, comment and to make their own informed recommendations. The bishops would be wise to act quickly on this and not to slip back into the old patterns of secrecy and denial. They can begin the long process of restoring relationships, trust and respect if they are prepared to demonstrate a genuine humility, transparency and willingness to work with the laity as partners. None of this may come easily for all of the bishops.

During a November 13, 2016 homily at Our Lady of the Nativity Church, Lawson NSW, Vincent Nguyen Van Long, the Bishop of Parramatta, publicly acknowledged that:

“Our (the bishops) reputation, our moral credibility, our trust capital, are effectively destroyed; destroyed in the wake of the sexual abuse crisis and which in itself is a vestige of the old tribalist, clericalist, insular, self sufficient, self contained, fortress Church.”

Archbishop Hart of Melbourne and President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, thinks quite differently and has made this abundantly clear in a statement during the first week of March 2018. In his view, ‘the revelations about Catholic child sex offenders and the system that supported them ‘hasn’t damaged the credibility of the Church.’”¹ Given the scale of contrary evidence, Hart is evidently in the grip of massive denialism and he’s not likely to be alone. Peter Wilkinson, President of Catholics for Renewal highlights the gravity of the situation, “If Australia’s bishops can’t understand what’s going on then we’re going nowhere,”²

The Australian Conference of bishops has failed dismally to convince the Catholic people that they have fully understood and accepted the recommendations of the Royal Commission and that they are genuinely resolved to divest themselves of the culture of not evading communication with the laity, of secrecy and clerical elitism that facilitated the clerical child sexual abuse disaster in the first place. The bishops also have their work cut out to prove to politicians and lawmakers that they fully grasp their responsibilities as members and participants of a free secular democratic society. That should not be surprising at all. Enda Kenny, Prime Minister of Ireland, in his July 21, 2011 “Cloyne speech” criticised the Vatican for holding the Irish State and its Constitution in contempt. Kenny cited a 1990 policy statement from CDF Prefect Cardinal Ratzinger, directed to bishops and theologians, declaring that ‘the Catholic Church could not be judged by secular standards: “Cardinal Josef

Ratzinger said: ‘Standards of conduct appropriate to civil society or the workings of a democracy cannot be purely and simply applied to the Church.’”³

The Australian bishops may mend some bridges after decades of toeing the Ratzinger line if they respond swiftly and comprehensively to the recommendations made to them by the Royal Commission. Most of them have already acknowledged their collective failures in some or another while others have been talking in ambiguities and have largely exhausted their claims to credibility. One wonders if some of them adequately understand how badly compromised they have become. In recent years some bishops have chosen to adopt the counterproductive ‘us versus them’ *culture wars* narrative to hit out at secular society that they believe has specifically singled out Christianity for targeted persecution. In a 2015 address to the staff of the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office, Fisher likened this ‘persecution’ to the attacks by Daesh (ISIS) on Christians in Iraq:

“The Baptist Christ praised in our Gospel was beheaded like the victims of Daesh, in his case for Judeo-Christian teaching about marriage. And for Catholic leaders and teachers in contemporary Australia, courage will be required too. There are people who would silence us if they could, as they attempt to impose not an Islamic but a secular caliphate. They drag our bishops before tribunals. They threaten our Catholic schools with accusations of complicity in bullying and homophobia. They seek to impose a kind of self-censorship on our people, so that none dares speak for marriage or other natural institutions and Christian values for fear of being written off as benighted, against the tide of history, religiously fanatical. The fidelity demanded of us may not cost us blood, but sweat and tears there may be in our time.”⁴

The tone and thread of victimhood in Fisher’s homily closely echo what Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, declared in May, 2010:

"I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history." ⁵

Fairfax reporters, Royce Millar, Chris Vedelgo and Ben Schneiders are probably correct in suggesting that the bishops have damaged not only themselves but that the episcopal office itself has been so badly compromised that it has effectively damaged its claim to legitimacy. It is now reasonable to believe that, without fundamental systemic change, an authority void will last for a very long time.³ There is at least one famous historical precedent for this collective forfeiture of authority and it was noted by John Henry Cardinal Newman.

US Catholic writer, Robert McClory has highlighted two aspects of Newman’s ecclesiology that are crucially important and immediately pertinent to the Australian situation. One is a caution to bishops who might be tempted to think that listening to the laity is a concession, doing them special favour, a gracious indulgence or a mere courtesy. McClory’s second point deals with the consequences of the collective episcopate’s breaking faith and trust with the Catholic people:

“A terrible mistake is made, contends Newman, when decisions regarding teaching, even dogmas, are made without consulting the sense of the faithful (*sensus fidelium*) or the agreement of the faithful (*consensus fidelium*). Such consultation, he argues, should not be

seen as a mere act of kindness or courtesy toward the laity; rather it is an absolute necessity, one of the essential ways the Church comes to know its tradition.”⁶

In his 1859 tract *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, Newman wrote:

“The Nicene dogma was maintained during the greater part of the fourth century not by the unswerving firmness of the Holy See, Councils, or Bishops, but ... by the *consensus fidelium*. On the other hand, then, I say, that there was a **temporary suspense** of the *Ecclesia docens* [the teaching church]. The body of the Bishops failed in their confession of the faith. There were untrustworthy Councils, unfaithful Bishops; there was weakness, fear of consequences, misguidance, delusion, hallucination, endless, hopeless, extending itself into every corner of the Catholic Church.” (Bold added)⁷

The period of ‘temporary suspense’ Newman referred to lasted around sixty years, from before Constantine’s Council of Nicaea in 325 CE until the Council of Constantinople under the aegis of Theodosius in 381 CE. During those years, it was the laity together with their local priests and deacons who maintained fidelity while the bishops persisted in broken faith and failed leadership. The laity in fact maintained congruent faith and exercised the triple ministry of teaching, governing and sanctifying in place of the defecting bishops. This phenomenon has probably reoccurred repeatedly over the centuries in different parts of the Church, possibly across the Universal Church.

In Australia, a plausible case could be made that the bishops have suffered an extended ‘temporary suspense’ of these ministries for decades, maybe for much longer. The breakdown of episcopal moral and doctrinal authority has been catastrophic especially since 1968 when the Faithful, *sensus fidei fidelium*, determined that the ban on artificial birth control in Paul VI’s encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* was/is not authentic Catholic doctrine and therefore not morally binding in conscience. Furthermore, it would be very informative if the Catholic people of Australia were surveyed about the binding authority of Pope John Paul II’s teaching on the theological impossibility of women being ordained to the priesthood. No doubt there would not be unanimity. People remain divided on the issue but it would be reasonable to believe that the majority of Catholics have not received John Paul II’s teaching on this matter and actually see it in conflict with the constitutional charter of Christianity spelt out by St Paul in Galatians 3:2-28.

Late last year, two members of *Catholics for Renewal* had a meal with a visiting US theologian who was on speaking tour in Australia. During the conversation the notion of ‘governance’ was mentioned a number of times until he finally asked for a clarification of what Catholics for Renewal means by the notion. He was provided with the following definition:

*Governance is a term used to describe how organisations are directed, controlled and held to account, encompassing the leadership, authority, accountability, culture and control of an organisation. Good organisations have good governance with high levels of accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of their members, regardless of gender or other diversity.*⁸

When it was explained to him, he responded by saying that he thought the American bishops would react to the suggestion that their own episcopal governance was deeply flawed and would appear to question the efficacy of the three charisms (the triple *munus*): ‘to teach, to sanctify and to govern’ that they receive at their ordination as bishops.

That is exactly what *Catholics for Renewal* has in mind when they have taken the Australian bishops to task over their catastrophic mishandling of the clerical child sexual abuse scandals dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. After all that, *Truth, Justice and Healing Council* CEO, Francis Sullivan asks the question of the bishops, ‘don’t they get it.’⁹ Pope Francis has historically shown only glimmering signs of grasping the situation. However, in April 2018 he did express regret and remorse by admitting his prior "serious mistakes in the assessment and perception of the situation" of sexual abuse in Chile. Apologies are now standard fare from Church leaders but, genuine as they may be, they do not change the underlying issues that must be changed.

What is the core problem in all this? The entire ordained leadership of the Catholic Church needs a massive shift away from the psychological and cultural distortion of clericalism. In its many disguises, clericalism has eroded their collective sense of being called to be servants and pastors not an elite band of the absurdly distant, the entitled and the unaccountable. Yves Congar offers a concise description of the arrogance toward and contempt for the laity intrinsic to the psychology of clericalism:

“We are still a long way from reaping the consequences of the rediscovery, which we have all made in principle, of the fact that the whole Church is a single people of God and that she is made up of the faithful as well as the clergy. We have an idea we feel implicitly and, without admitting it, unconsciously that the Church is the clergy and that the faithful are only our clients and beneficiaries. This terrible concept has been built into so many of our structures and habits that it seems to be taken for granted and beyond change. It is a betrayal of the truth. A great deal still remains to be done to declericalize our conceptions of the Church (without jeopardizing her hierarchical structures), and to put the clergy back where they belong, in the place of member-servants”¹⁰

The bishops also have to face the fact that the so-called sacramental ‘grace of office’, a divine support that is mentioned so often in sacramental theology, has failed them monumentally or was delusional all along.

The late Fr Richard (John) Neuhaus at the very end of his life in 2018 wrote about the colossal damage to the intuitions, spirit, reform agenda and theology of Vatican II caused by the scandal of clericalism:

“Russell Shaw’s *Nothing to Hide* has useful suggestions for creating a broader and collaborative relationship of mutual respect between clergy and laity. He notes, for instance, that there was great interest in diocesan councils and parish councils in the period following Vatican II, but in recent years that interest has dramatically declined. Bishops and priests say that the councils were more hindrance than help, that laypeople simply don’t understand the complexities of diocesan and parish governance. Shaw protests the circularity of this line of reasoning: **People are excluded because they don’t understand and don’t understand because they are excluded.**”¹¹ (Bold added)

In an Advent 2017 commentary on Mark 1: 1-8, Australian biblical scholar, Dr Veronica Lawson RSM offers a useful insight into the meaning of the word *metanoia*, a conversion of heart and mind taught by Jesus and an insight that the our bishops should embrace:

*This reading invites us to prepare for God's advent by ritualising metanoia (usually translated as "repentance"), and thus being ready for the one who comes. The translation "repentance" does not convey the nuances of the Greek term **metanoia** which literally means a "change of mind" and suggests an **"expansion of horizons."*** ¹⁰ (Bold added) ¹²

A concrete programme of renewal for the bishops would include a reconversion to Vatican II's call to discern the signs of the times and to commit to systemic reform and profound renewal. The Council provided an expansion of horizons moment for the entire Church after centuries of stagnation and institutional entropy. Vatican II challenged the bishops to act like leaders, with courage, imagination and a sense of healthy independence. This was always going to be difficult given the enormous pressure on bishops to comply with and to conform to both peer pressure and the duress coming from Vatican bureaucrats. This tendency seems to become embedded in the psyche the moment a priest is ordained a bishop. Robert McClory puts the question, "Is there perhaps something inherently numbing in the episcopal consecration ceremony itself that renders recipients submissive ever after?" ¹³

A related challenge for many of the current bishops is to distance themselves from the forty years of regression, restorationism and minimalist reception of the Council by their monitors and micro-managers, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. It's time for those expanded horizons to be opened up once again. US Church historian John W. O'Malley sj explains the foundational cultural shifts generated by Vatican II. He speaks of Council as a 'language event,' at which the discourse of the Church was purposefully disconnected from the narrow, brittle exclusionary formulae of Scholasticism to embrace the plain language of Christian humanism to give new expression to itself and its mission in the world:

"Among the words are brothers/sisters, friendship, cooperation, collaboration, partnership, freedom, dialogue, pilgrim, servant ("king"), development, evolution, charisma, dignity, holiness, conscience, collegiality, people of God, priesthood of all believers. Liberty, equality and fraternity as well as other formerly unwelcome guests knocked at the door and gained entrance to the feast. A simple pairing of the models implied by this vocabulary with the models it replaced or balanced conveys the import of this third issue-under-the-issues.

It suggests, indeed, that at stake were almost two different visions of Catholicism: from command to invitation, from laws to ideals, from definition to mystery, from threats to persuasion, from coercion to conscience, from monologue to dialogue, from ruling to serving, from withdrawn to integrated, from vertical to horizontal, from exclusion to inclusion, from hostility to friendship, from rivalry to partnership, from suspicion to trust, from static to ongoing, from passive acceptance to active engagement, from fault-finding to appreciation, from prescriptive to principled, from behaviour modification to inner appropriation." ¹⁴

Catholics for Renewal are calling on the bishops to release *TJHC* report without delay after it has been tabled so that all Catholics will have the opportunity to study it, add their own assessments and recommendations for **the reform of structures that can be implemented almost immediately and, if necessary, legislated for at the Plenary.** (Bold added) This kind of co-responsibility and openness will stimulate the renewal of the Faith, the rebuilding of confidence and the restoration of morale among Australian Catholics. The Church's governance will change and develop but only if the bishops are shifted out of the pyramid mentality that sits better with monarchical power. The

metamorphosis will be hastened when they are re-embrace the foundational Christian idea that they belong to a society of equals and that communication in such a community is best served by quiet, decent, respectful conversations at the common table and not via one way pronouncements trumpeted in an audience hall.

In these ecclesial assemblies, all the major contentious matters that are polarising the Church in Australia must be named, tabled and calmly addressed by all. The bishops cannot afford to lose the trust of the Catholic people again by claiming that things are ‘beyond their competency’, that the time is not ‘opportune’ to act or employing any other device that stalls achievable, reasonable lasting change. What the bishops have been urged to do by the Royal Commission and by Catholic people is to urge effect immediate changes to those organisational structures, cultures and governance that are within their competency. The bishops should understand by now that, collectively, Australian Catholic are pastorally acutely aware of what is going on in the Church and have a history of theological literacy to support them. They are not ignorant about what reforms can and cannot be effected quickly. The late Richard McBrien once said that "When we study history, we realize that there is very, very little about the church that cannot change." ¹⁵

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the *Truth, Justice and Healing Council*, has reached similar conclusion. After years of dealing with episcopal hubris, dissemblance, avoidance, factional power games and sheer incompetence, Sullivan eventually lost patience with his employers. In a March 2018 speech he may have provided a glimpse into the recommendations of the *TJHC* interim report to the Bishops’ Conference:

“Governance must reflect the identity, ethos and purpose of what it is to be Church, or things can and did go very badly wrong The Church must not fall into the trap of maintaining a rigid, defensive focus where its mission, as articulated by the Gospel, is undermined by expediency and self-preservation. The leadership of an organization, including the Catholic Church, shapes the assumptions, values, beliefs and norms of its culture. This in turn influences how individuals behave, particularly with vulnerable people. Most, if not all Church leaders, are now prepared to call the abuse crisis for what it is. But we will only know if anything has really been learnt when we see how the Church leadership responds to the Royal Commission’s recommendations over the next couple of years.” ¹⁶

Some concluding thoughts

After hearing the news that Pope Francis had finally given his confirmation for the National Plenary Council in 2020/21, Archbishop Mark Coleridge said:

“We sincerely hope the preparation and celebration of the Plenary Council is a time when all parts of the Church listen to and dialogue with one another as we explore together how we might answer the question: ‘What do you think God is asking of us in Australia?’” ¹⁷

It is reasonable to suggest that the archbishop and his companions in the *ACBC* will get a clear answer to that question if and when they all, over the next year or two, sit with their fellow Catholics, listen intently to everything that is said, speaking very little themselves, let go of fear, defensiveness and confected persecution then simply allow what Newman called the *Conspiratio*, the

authentic living, breathing together, working relationship between bishop and people to generate its own grace and collective wisdom (*consensus fidelium*). The pre-Synod agenda has a lengthy time slot set aside from June to November 2019 for ‘deep discernment’ and ‘theological reflection.’ The faithful have been engaged in both, ‘theological reflection’ and ‘deep discernment’ for the last sixty years, probably for more like a hundred and fifty years. They have learned a great deal and have much to teach their bishops. The Church taught has now become the teaching Church.

But the plenary council must not be used as a delaying tactical to avoid facing existing known wrongs that demand correction now. In particular, bishops must immediately accept the need to embrace the culture and practice accountability, transparency and inclusion, particularly of women, in the administration of all dioceses and parishes. A request by the Plenary Council to the Holy See for an exemption from Canon 129, sect 1 that, among other things, expressly excludes non-clerics from the power of governance, also called ‘jurisdiction.’ The establishment of lay governance will, over time, bring about equilibrium by creating a new standard of ‘normality.’ This would eventually shift the way people think about the interconnectedness of relationships and co-responsibility within the Church.

The bishops should rightly be commended for calling the Synod, albeit with no acknowledgment of the laity, religious and priests lay who had been urging one for years, or that there was no public consultation. What is not needed ahead of any Synod is months of confected “celebration”, whatever the bishops mean by that, but an extended period of humble nation wide listening. After that, the bishop could be better placed to hold the Canonical Synod in 2020/21. They should not however, expect that the laity would be very interested in a limited in being guests at an episcopal event where membership of the voting bloc is strictly limited by Canon law.

With all the assurances by the bishops of free, open, candid conversations in preparation for the National Plenary, a final word goes to French priest and philosopher, Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), “It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.” (*Aphorisms*). That would be a good starting point.

Endnotes:

- 1) Joanne McCarthy, “Reformers urge Australian bishops to release report on child sexual abuse royal commission” *The Newcastle Herald*, 15 March, 2018. (<http://www.victorharbortimes.com.au/story/5286359/catholic-church-faces-make-or-break-time/> Accessed 17/03/2018). Helen Davidson, “Child sexual abuse royal commission delivers final report – as it happened” *The Guardian* 15 Dec, 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/live/2017/dec/15/child-sexual-abuse-royal-commission-delivers-final-report-live> Accessed 12/03/2018).
- 2) Joanne McCarthy, “Reformers urge Australian bishops to release report on child sexual abuse royal commission,” *The Newcastle Herald* March 15, 2018. (<http://www.theleader.com.au/story/5287379/catholic-church-faces-make-or-break-time/> Accessed 23/03/2018).
- 3) “Faith no more: parishioners lose trust in church,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 February 2018. (<https://www.smh.com.au/national/faith-no-more-parishioners-lose-trust-in-church-20180209-p4yzuz.html> Accessed 04/03/2018); Ben Schneiders, Royce Millar & Chris Vedelago, “Catholic Church fails to confront tragedy of ‘epic proportions’” *The Age* 10 March 2018 (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/catholic-church-fails-to-confront-tragedy-of-epic-proportions-20180310-p4z3qv.html> Accessed 11/03/2018). Enda

- Kenny's speech (<https://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0720/303965-cloyne1/> accessed 28/02/2018) Ratzinger's statement: "Vatican Warns Theologians Not to Dissent" June 27, 1990|WILLIAM D. MONTALBANO | TIMES STAFF WRITER The Los Angeles Times (http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-27/news/mn-636_1_vatican-warns-theologians Accessed 27/01/2018). Related to this, see John Paul II, "While exchanges and conflicts of opinion may constitute normal expressions of public life in a representative democracy, moral teaching certainly cannot depend simply upon respect for a process: indeed, it is in no way established by following the rules and deliberative procedures typical of a democracy. *Dissent*, in the form of carefully orchestrated protests and polemics carried on in the media, *is opposed to ecclesial communion and to a correct understanding of the hierarchical constitution of the People of God*. Opposition to the teaching of the Church's Pastors cannot be seen as a legitimate expression either of Christian freedom or of the diversity of the Spirit's gifts. When this happens, the Church's Pastors have the duty to act in conformity with their apostolic mission, insisting that *the right of the faithful* to receive Catholic doctrine in its purity and integrity must always be respected. "Never forgetting that he too is a member of the People of God, the theologian must be respectful of them, and be committed to offering them a teaching which in no way does harm to the doctrine of the faith". *Veritatis Splendor* (1993: 113).
- 4) Homily for CEO End of Year Staff Mass, Thursday of the Second Week of Advent, St Brigid's Church, Marrickville, NSW., 10 Dec 2015. (https://www.sydneycatholic.org/people/archbishop/homilies/2015/20151210_669.shtml Accessed 15/004/2018).
 - 5) Tim Blake, "Cardinal Francis George: The Myth and Reality of 'I'll Die in my Bed'" *National Catholic Register*, April 17, 2015 (<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/tim-drake/the-myth-and-the-reality-of-ill-die-in-my-bed> Accessed 18/04/22018).
 - 6) *As it was in the Beginning. The coming Democratization of the Catholic Church* (New York: Crossroad Books, 2007), 55.
 - 7) Newman's *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 77.
 - 8) Final report on the Open Letter to the Bishops with comments (Accessed 01/-6/2017 <http://www.catholicsforrenewal.org/Reporting%20OL%20to%20Bishops%20of%20Australia%20with%20App%20comments-%20FINAL%20-%20202%20May%202017.pdf>).
 - 9) Fatima Measham, "Francis Sullivan: Reform and renewal after Royal Commission," *Eureka Street* 23 January 2018 (<https://eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=54488> Accessed 24/03/2018).
 - 10) *Power and Poverty in the Church. The renewal and Understanding of Service* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016 (1963) 139.
 - 11) Richard 'John' Neuhaus, Clerical Scandal and the Scandal of Clericalism," *First Things* March 2008. (<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/03/clerical-scandal-and-the-scandal-of-clericalism> Accessed 12/03/2018).
 - 12) Scripture Readings for the weekend liturgy, Ballarat Diocese website, 08/12/2017.
 - 13) *As it was in the Beginning*. 93.
 - 14) *What Happened at the Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2018) 306-307.
 - 15) Edward P. Hahnenberg, "History and mystery: Two themes that guided the late Fr. Richard McBrien," NCR, Jan. 28, 2015 (Accessed 08/10/2017 <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/history-and-mystery-two-themes-guided-late-fr-richard-mcbrien>).
 - 16) A March 22, 2018 address to a gathering of *Concerned Catholics* in Canberra, ACT. See also, Francis Sullivan speaks about that distorted theology that Pope Francis has called a "disease of the Church": Fatima Measham, "Francis Sullivan: Reform and renewal after Royal Commission Church leaders never fully acknowledged that the culture, structure, processes of the church were part of the problem" *La Croix International*, February 3, 2018 (https://international.la-croix.com/news/francis-sullivan-reform-and-renewal-after-royal-commission/6859?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=03-02-2018&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=5c7a761bea4a528392b18c68a26ea4f8 Accessed 04/02/2018). See also, John Warhurst, "Mud wrestling the Catholic elephant," *Eureka Street*, 31 March, 2018. (https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=54843&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Wednesday%204%20April%202018&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Wednesday%204%20April%202018+CID_9e12fe478d6094e79a5d710abbaeffa&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=Mud-wrestling%20the%20Catholic%20elephant Accessed 16/04/2018).
 - 17) "Pope Francis backs decision to hold Plenary Council in Australia" *Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media blog*, March 19, 2018. (<http://mediablog.catholic.org.au/pope-francis-backs-decision-hold-plenary-council-australia/> Accessed 10/04/2018).

