

Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform

THE FUTURE OF CATHOLICISM IN AUSTRALIA Convocations of Catholics

Convocation 2. Information Sheet Outcomes and actions for the Plenary Council Thursday, 26 August 2021

The second Convocation on *The Future of Catholicism in Australia* will bring together diverse but complementary perspectives on the current state and future prospects for our Church in Australia. As we look forward to the first assembly of the Plenary Council, 3-10 October 2021, we focus more closely on the outcomes to be expected. Pope Francis has stressed the engagement of all Catholics, beginning with local communities, as integral to plenary councils and to the universal Synod on Synodality in 2023.

This Convocation will build on the momentum generated by Joan Chittister's powerful call to action in our first Convocation. The speakers at this Convocation will set down markers for a Synodal Way, speaking to the deep desires among Australian Catholics for a fresh vision and new directions.

Our aim is to emphasise the importance of a successful Plenary Council for all Catholics in Australia. We will be highlighting the matters that Catholics want addressed and resolved. The voices of the people, the sense of the faith of the faithful, must be heard in free and open discussion, particularly on matters such as the Church's governance, and the inclusion and engagement of all Catholics.

Through these Convocations, we seek:

- To promote a vision for the future of Catholicism, informed by the lives of ordinary people, particularly in the context of the forthcoming Plenary Council;
- To give a voice to Catholics, promote critical thinking and build personal confidence through sharing ideas and perspectives, particularly in the light of Vatican II and the leadership of Pope Francis;
- To address the role of women in the Church and gender balance in decision making and ministry;
- To promote engagement with the spirituality of Australia's First Nations peoples
- To promote justice with special regard to LGBTIQ+ people;
- To explore Church teachings that hinder participation by Catholics;
- To identify areas needing improvement in accountability, transparency and inclusiveness;
- To initiate and support lay movements for renewal and reform;
- To assist the bishops of Australia in understanding the priorities and concerns of the faithful.

The Convocation will be opened by **Dr. Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann**, Senior Australian of the Year 2021, an Aboriginal elder from Nauiyu, and a renowned artist, activist, writer and public speaker. Miriam-Rose was the Northern Territory's first fully qualified Aboriginal teacher, later the principal of the Catholic school in her home community, and subsequently a member of the Federal Government's advisory body, the National Indigenous Council. In 2013, she established the Miriam Rose Foundation, to bridge the divide between Aboriginal culture and the mainstream.

Three expert and highly regarded authorities on Church matters will give us their perspectives on the context of the Plenary Council and offer insights into how it could enable our Church to move forward.

Dr Jessie Rogers is a member of the Synod Steering Committee for Ireland's *Synodal Journey*. Dr Rogers, Dean of Theology at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, is a member of the Irish Biblical Association, the South African Society for Near Eastern Studies, and the European Society for Catholic Theology. She has considerable experience in working with synods in Ireland and the UK. Jessie will reflect on the international context of the Plenary Council and on what is involved in a synodal journey.

Robert Fitzgerald was a Royal Commissioner into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. He has extensive experience in organisational leadership and public and social policy review in the Church and in the government and private sectors. He has also been a Commissioner for multiple social policy inquiries in Australia. Robert will focus on the practical outcomes required to meet the real challenges facing our Church today.

Debra Zanella is the Chief Executive Officer of Ruah Community Services in Western Australia. Debra has 20 years' experience in the community sector and is a strong advocate for vulnerable and disadvantaged people. She is inspired by the prophetic views of Joan Chittister and shares her concern for the unequal treatment of women in the Catholic Church, a topic not raised in the Plenary Council's 'Agenda Questions'. Debra will share her desire for a new Church with a prophetic vision based on lived experience and hope for a diverse, inclusive and welcoming community

Participants will be invited to join in a Q&A type discussion with the speakers.

Professor Emeritus John Warhurst will summarise the proceedings and speak to our Plenary Council Agenda proposals. John is an Emeritus Professor of the Australian National University, Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn and a Plenary Council member. John writes regularly for Eureka Street and the Canberra Times. He was a member of the writing team for *Light from the Southern Cross*, the report on Church governance commissioned by the Australian bishops, following the Royal Commission.

This, the second of three convocations convened by ACCCR (Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform) under the heading *The Future of Catholicism in Australia*, supports the Plenary Council process. We are reaching out to all Catholics so that together we can reshape our Church as a life-enhancing community of the followers of Jesus.

A momentum for renewal is building but it needs consolidation, encouragement and support. Your participation in this Convocation will take us another step forward in discerning our future and creating the Church we seek.

For free registration, click [HERE](#) if you have not already registered through the first convocation, in which case we will contact you separately.

For more information, contact: Kevin Liston on email – auscathcoalition@gmail.com
Ph. +61 411 197 829 or go to the ACCCR website – <http://www.acccr.com.au>

Please forward this to anyone you think may be interested.
Be blessed.

Eleanor Flynn
Co-conveners, Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR)
25 July 2021

Peter Johnstone