

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn View of Plenary Council

We have no one view. Our views range from desperately pessimistic to quietly optimistic. On August 17 we are hosting a public forum in Canberra to explore these views further and they may change. This short note has been written by John Warhurst and reflects his views only. Other views from CCCG can be found in the writings of other committee members, including Paul Collins and Francis Sullivan.

The difference in views comes about for various reasons. These include differing aspirations and expectations. The higher the aspirations the greater the disappointment. The incrementalists among us are happy enough that the PC took some steps in the right direction. Those with higher aspirations are more inclined to see the limitations and missed opportunities in the outcomes.

The differences also represent different personal interests, because the eight parts of the motions and amendments agenda at the Second Assembly cover a wide range of topics. Better, perhaps, to be specific and judge the outcomes in individual areas like governance, women, ecology, Indigenous, child sexual abuse, liturgy, formation, outreach etc.

Those who participated as Members also seem more positive than those who were observers. The members rated the gains made within the assembly, against conservative resistance, as a positive outcome. My somewhat optimistic view on the outcomes re women, for instance, has been influenced by learning from the women in the hall who were quietly satisfied despite some disappointments.

I also wonder whether I have been influenced by the positive reporting of international observers like Christopher Lamb and others. Their frame of reference is comparative rather than Australian and does not take into account the higher expectations and hard work of Australian reformers, including ACCCR.

I think it is worthwhile taking some time to digest the outcome and not rush to conclusions. It is also important to follow closely the implementation that takes place in dioceses and parishes over the next twelve months. There will be little or no push coming from the ACBC. I have some hopes, though, for the proposed new national synodal body.

John Warhurst August 11 2022