

## **PLENARY THEME 5**

### **A Christ-Centred Church that is**

#### **A JOYFUL, HOPE-FILLED & SERVANT COMMUNITY**

- In order to allow for the necessary healing and positive transformation within the Church towards a J H-F S Community, **there must firstly be a public acknowledgement of, and demonstrable remorse for, the dreadful blight of child sexual abuse & its cover up committed within the Church,** and acceptance of the Royal Commission's recommendations . This is essential for the credibility of the church, in order to move ahead with any of the Plenary Themes.
- Vatican II – especially *Gaudium et Spes* - should be again embraced as a touchstone for informing and guiding our faith communities on the way to becoming 'Joyful and Hope-Filled'. **There is no need to 'reinvent the wheel'. The road map is there,** although the road itself has been overgrown by disuse & lack of maintenance .
- **Focus for liturgical and parish/faith community activities should above all be Christ centred** rather than stuck on unnecessarily outdated, formal ritualistic precepts. Attention to the warmth of welcoming, quality of music and musicians, and social informality should be the hallmarks of a joyful, hope-filled community – with due deference of course to the significance and transcendence of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
- In the past Catholic communities have come together out of a sense of obligation - and even fear and guilt, with 'Father' being the sole (or primary) motivator and executor of everything liturgical, pastoral or communal. This is not only undesirable but increasingly impractical – even impossible. **We should aspire to come together for each other – and for others – as Christ teaches .**
- Priests have a central sacramental role which is to be honoured, respected and supported, but the **Mass & community activities should be opened up to allow others ( women and men) to fulfill any and all other roles,** including the liturgy of the word, preaching, community outreach/pastoral care (see later), hospitality, counselling, administration etc etc according to their demonstrated gifts. As St Paul says, we are all members of the body of Christ and have a role to play as part of that body.
- Opportunities should be provided for Catholic faith communities (with or without resident priests) to have access to training to perform and perfect these roles/gifts for the benefit of others within the community and beyond. This should include spiritually enriching opportunities of prayer and reflection and guided meditation.

- **Ecumenism should be enthusiastically pursued** by Catholic communities beginning with joint celebrations of the major Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter, **to spread the “Joy and Hope”**. This has been done in many parishes, notably Hunters Hill Christian churches and also North Sydney Parish under Fr Tony Smith (but since discontinued to much disappointment). So, there are many examples which can be used as best practice examples.
- **Sincere and loving pastoral care is essential to a hope-filled & servant community.** Many parishes have active pastoral care ministries, and of course a major role is played by St Vincent de Paul in community outreach. But what is envisaged here is a wider embrace of community needs involving others in the community. This might range from visitations in the case of illness & personal tragedy & grief support, to small acts of kindness to those who are lonely or need help with shopping or transport.
- Finally, **we need to provide practical examples of how a Joyful, Hope-Filled and Servant Community works.** There are many examples of these but these should
- be studied and documented and used as templates.