

## A Missionary Impulse

In recent days a document containing the proposals arising from the 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Plenary Council has been released. The updated version, released 15 Dec 2021, has 110 pages. If you would like to read it, the link is provided below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wi8RrPZPBKSHX-b6jjY3gvMdQQ26tcse/view>

Yes, I have read it, but confess to skimming over sections that contained repetition because a few small groups dealt with 2 questions instead of 1 question.

In advance I apologise for how brutal my assessment of this document is.

As I read each page, I did expect something fresh and surprising to galvanise me with enthusiasm. Because that's the hallmark of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is full of fresh vitality and loves to surprise us with new solutions to old problems and cause all of us to say, 'Yes! Aha! That's it! How come we never thought of that before? That'd actually work! Count me in!'.

What I did find were:

lots of personal agendas

lots of special interest group agendas

lots of human solutions, most of them anything but fresh,

lots of expensive requests for best practice research

expectations that formation will solve everything

expectations that better resources will solve everything

expectations that national standards will solve everything

expectations that things are quite OK, with a grudging openness to minor tweaks

So I conclude that the majority of participants were unable to relinquish their own agendas and their own pre-conceived notions.

I further conclude based on the complete squashing of the notion that 'when considering the success or failure of educational facilities that the percentage of graduates who have become missionary disciples while at that educational facility really matters' – that really listening to each other didn't happen.

Listening to majority opinions happened; but listening to minority opinions not so much. Sometimes the voice of the Holy Spirit is in the consensus, (Acts 6:5, Acts 15:23-29) but sometimes the voice of the Holy Spirit is in a Daniel. (Daniel 13:41c-62)

Here are some interesting statistics:

In the document, the Holy Spirit (the One we were supposedly listening to), was mentioned 15 times, and 5 of those times were in the 9 Oct 2021 Concluding Statement.

Family was mentioned 33 times; families 19 times.

Evangelism and Evangelisation were mentioned 31 times.

Formation was mentioned a whopping 163 times.

Several proposals are good, but of the kind that cannot be imposed from without, and can only happen through people anointed by God, in His timing, to make them happen, eg a religious order dedicated to the care and healing of the abused and traumatised.

What we have is a list of very well-intentioned human solutions.

Yet all the questions considered by the Plenary Council small groups were based in *Evangelii Gaudium* 27

27. I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion".

And none of the questions considered the source of a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything.

Missionary impulses do not come from man, they come from God.

Pentecost, (Acts 2), was a missionary impulse that changed everything.

Another missionary impulse that changed everything happened in Acts 4:23-31.

The conversion of St Paul (Acts 9:1-22) contained a missionary impulse which changed everything.

Likewise the conversions of St Augustine of Hippo, St Francis of Assisi, St Dominic, St Ignatius of Loyola and St Teresa of Avila changed the world, and are still changing the world.

The missionary impact of Our Lady of Guadalupe is still changing the world too.

None of these Plenary Council questions considered how to practically cope with the results of a such a missionary impulse (Isaiah 54:1-10).

People who believe that God is initiating a missionary impulse do make room, do enlarge the size of their tents, do spread their tent cloths wider, do lengthen the tent ropes, and secure the lot firmly with tent pegs.

If you really believe that God is going to send you a deluge of rain, then you stock up on umbrellas and gumboots, and you get extra water-tanks, you increase the capacity of your dams, and you clean out the gutters and fix the places that normally leak.

What, sincerely, do we need to do to prepare for a massive missionary impulse?

For example what would need to change if you had 3000 people show up at the parish office in one day; 1200 needing confession, 300 begging for deliverance, 500 begging for baptism, 700 wanting to know how to serve God better and do effective penance, 400 begging to become Catholic/do RCIA, 300 seeking explanation for the weird spiritual experiences they have been having, and 300 wanting to donate goods and large sums of money as evidence of their repentance to God?

What if that happened every day for a month?

Or for 3 months?

What if the numbers of the spiritually needy kept increasing each day?

My proposal is for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly of the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary council to spend half its time in prayer begging the Holy Spirit to grant such a missionary impulse to Australia, and to spend the other half of its time earnestly seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit for how to both effectively plan and respond to the results of such a missionary impulse.

Then we might see this land truly embrace its destiny of being the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit - and see that longed for missionary impulse happen.

Amen? Amen!!