

Health in the Lord and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit...[Rule of Saint Albert]

JPIC 118 – AUGUST 2022 Saudavel iha Maromak no grasa Spirtu Santo Nian . [Regula Sto Alberto]

“A Mandate for Justice”



During the second general assembly of the Plenary Council more than 35 motions were put to a vote. Father Paul Cahill, Prior Provincial of the Carmelites in Australia and Timor-Leste was a Member, formerly referred to as a Delegate, at both the first and second assemblies. He is interviewed here by Peter Thomas, JPIC Team.



JPIC: *What was your overall impression of the Plenary Council?*

Paul: I felt that this was an event and a process that was guided by the Holy Spirit. People were faithful to discerning that fundamental question of the assembly, what is God asking us in Australia today. This question was brought into focus through the process of spiritual conversation, integral to both the first and second assembly.

From a functional point-of-view the assembly was quite a feat. I was struck by what a massive undertaking it was. The process has been going on for four years. There was the consultation phase then the first assembly, which was held in the middle of Covid with an on-line assembly and finally the second assembly.

There were an amazing number of people involved, the people in the background, the people writing and receiving papers and those collecting feedback. Quite a process!

It was a tremendous effort to get everyone to the second assembly. Just the organising of the physical layout of the place which involved converting it from a meeting space to an occasional massive dining room was extraordinary. The amount of organisation and the commitment of people - very impressive.

The overall running was managed by the steering committee chaired by the vice-president of the council Bishop Shane McKinley who did a magnificent job. There was good will and good spirits among the participants particularly evident in the second assembly when we were there in person.

In spite of a fair degree of scepticism people entered into the process, listening to each other and feeling free to speak openly. So overall my impression is very positive.



Members voting at the Plenary Council

JPIC: *What were the important justice issues discussed?*



Paul: Well there was a justice element to each of the eight parts. When you look at the first part the recognition and reconciliation with First Nations Australians and the general focus on respect, equality, dignity and inclusion. These are fundamental justice issues.

The part responding to abuse victims, including the matter of compensation and the re-commitment that all relationships within the church and between the church and anyone else is safe and respectful was obviously a matter of justice.

The focus on missionary outreach to people on the margins, e.g. refugees, asylum seekers etc. was seen as a way for the Church to contribute to the establishment a more just and compassionate society.

The element of the assembly that got the most publicity and received the most attention was related to the equal dignity of men and women, clearly a justice issue.

The emphasis on inclusion in worship, giving people their rightful place in the worshipping assembly, again seems to me a justice issue.

In formation there was an emphasis on making sure both clerics and lay have appropriate formation to engage in the mission of the Church.

Governance is I believe a justice issue. It's about insuring that all the baptised not just the hierarchy have the opportunity to participate in accordance with the rights of their baptism.

Finally, the part on ecology and care for our common home and commitment to the Laudate Si action plans is obviously a very important justice issue.

JPIC: *Were there any issues raised that were of particular interest to you as a Carmelite?*

Paul: Yes the issue on the equal dignity of women and men.

I think too that the whole process was a synodal or listening process, a process where everyone had an equal voice. That I believe is a really contemplative and pastoral process, the sort of process we would engage in our own Carmelite chapter and community discernments. That underlying synodal philosophy particularly resonates with the Carmelite ethos.

Also the desire to have more accessible and relevant liturgy and indeed all the other matters at the assembly has a resonance with the Carmelite mission.

JPIC: *So what happens now? How will the Plenary's decisions on these matters influence the Australian church? How will they be implemented?*

Paul: If you look at all the various motions that were passed and the decrees formulated there's really nothing revolutionary there and nothing that you couldn't be doing now, however there is a formal process by which the decrees will be implemented including the acceptance of the decrees by the Bishop's Conference in November then they go to Rome and finally after this journey they can be formally adopted.

Ultimately it's up to each diocese and parish to be re-focussing on the endorsements that have come from the plenary.

The implementation will rely on the goodwill of bishops and parish priests along with their diocesan pastoral councils and parish pastoral councils. There was a strong mandate that diocesan and parish pastoral councils be established.

JPIC: *Anything else you'd like to add?*

Paul: In many ways the best thing about it is that it happened! It signals a shift in the way we go about doing our



business. A few years ago Archbishop Mark Coleridge, who at that time was President of the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference said that we can't go on with business as usual and I think that's been accepted.

This new style, this synodal style, this cultural shift where it's not just the clerics who call the shots but all the baptised have their rightful place in the mission of the church will take a little time to be implemented.

The plenary council has given an impetus to a change in style, a change in culture, a new way of doing things. It's not business as usual.

.... Paul Cahill, O.Carm

YOU ARE INVITED to a further Carmelite Conversation via zoom on the JULY ASSEMBLY OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL, with Paul Cahill O.Carm, Wednesday 3 August, 10.30am – 12 midday ... For further information, to register, and the link at the Carmelite Centre, Melbourne:
<https://www.thecarmelitecentremelbourne.org/>



<https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/>

Social Justice Sunday 28 August

- The release of the Social Justice Statement 2022-23 will be on 3rd August.

Respect: Confronting Violence and Abuse

points out that the roots of domestic and family violence "lie in the abuse of power to control and dominate others" and that "this stands in contrast to the relationships to which God calls us".

Respect: Confronting Violence and Abuse

focuses in a special way on the problem of spiritual violence and abuse. It discusses how religious teachings – including our own – may be manipulated by perpetrators to excuse violence or to exert control over others.

The Statement calls for faith communities to support and believe those going through domestic and family violence and abuse, to hold perpetrators to account and work towards individual and social transformation.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT OF ST MARY OF THE CROSS MACKILLOP (FEAST DAY ON 8TH AUGUST)

God of the prophets you gifted Mary Mackillop with vision and courage. In her we see one who was not afraid to speak fearlessly your gospel of love.

We pray for the sensitivity and imagination to read the signs of our times, and to articulate new possibilities for our own day. Like Mary, may we learn to confront all that is oppressive and unjust, and empower others towards true freedom and integrity. Spirit of wisdom, be with us as we face new horizons. Amen.

God of all blessings, you revealed in Mary Mackillop a sensitivity to the rights and dignity of every person, regardless of race or creed. May we learn from her to overcome the obstacles of prejudice and fear. Help us to value the goodness of each person and all the blessings of unity in diversity.

We ask this through the depth and unity of you, our bountiful god, who hold all things in Being. Amen.

Plenary Council Resources:

<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/walkinthespirit/>