

Within the Gospels there are various accounts of times when Jesus seemed not to meet the human expectations of the disciples.

Whether it was James and John seeking a throne beside that of Jesus (Matt 20:20-28), Peter who is rebuked by Jesus on various occasions (Matt 16:23; Matt 26:34; John 18:10-11), or even Judas (cf. John 12:4-5) who ultimately sells the Lord for 30 pieces of silver (Matt 26:15-16) these Gospel narratives speak into a reality that the divine economy is not the human economy; that the ways that we humans might perceive that which is before us is different than that of the deeper and fuller perception that is beheld by God.

I think this is good place to commence a reflection on the recently concluded second assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia; that of a humble recognition that our own human expectations will always be exceeded by the divine presence that works within and through us, if only we co-operate and not frustrate the reality of the Holy Spirit who is at work in the lives of us all. Too often the human person is limited by a narrow and, in our Australian experience, increasingly secular horizon; for God there is no horizon, in transcending all limitations and barriers, he continually calls all people into a personal relationship with Truth, Beauty and Goodness wherever they might find themselves and whatever their circumstances in the world.

Much has been made in both secular and church media, nationally and worldwide of elements of drama and tension during the Council. Other commentary, more prolific on social media, seems to accentuate in a divisive and unhelpful way the spectrum between those on the extremes who either seem to long for the nostalgia of an imagined past that never truly was or who harbour designs of a ruptured future that is fashioned only in their own image.

I, however, remain more hopeful; The Plenary Council has been a very visible and tangible sign that we remain, as noted in the Council's own Statutes and Regulatory Norms:

*“Grounded in and modelled on the divine Trinitarian communio, the church is, at once, a communio fidelium, a communio ecclesiarum, and a communio hierarchica. That is, the church (as the People of God the Father, the Body of Christ the Son, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit) is called to be: a communio of all faithful believers in the God of Jesus Christ; a universal communio of the local churches where the faithful of a particular geographical area strive to live out the Gospel; and a communio of the bishops of those local churches who are in communion with all other local bishops in the world and in communion with the bishop of Rome”*

This then is as true for all of us in the Diocese of Rockhampton as it is for all other dioceses across Australia. In preparing to receive the *'recognitio'* from the Holy See, we in our Diocese can begin to turn our hearts and minds prayerfully forward to the Implementation Phase. We are in many ways in our Plenary journey, for a moment akin to the Israelites encamped on

the East Bank of Jordan having been led by the Spirit of God in the Pillar of Cloud (Josh 1:10-12); the promised land lies ever before us, but we are not yet now there. Preparations and provisioning must surely now ensue. It is a journey that subsists now in the broader Christian journeys of us all, animated by a shared and common baptism, and nourished by the sacramental life that pours forth grace into our lives; and from our lives of Christian witness then into the world so that Christ, the *Lumen Gentium*, might come to shine into and then out of the hearts of all. If properly understood then, the Plenary journey, regardless of its exterior expressions, is not a new journey; rather it is a part of our Christian journey.

In taking advantage of this moment then of 'encampment' as we await the '*recognitio*', I encourage all people from across the Diocese to read or reread the documents which are all available on the Plenary Council's website: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au> . By reflecting on what the Spirit continues to say to us within these documents and within our own experiences and reflections, our Diocese can 'prepare and provision' for the next phase of the Plenary journey, just as we, with faith, hope and love, prepare and discern the next phase of our own personal and communal Christian journeys with the One who accompanies us, loves us, willed us into being and calls us to continue to contribute to the ongoing '*Missio Dei*'; the Mission of God in our wonderful Diocese and all the world.