



ACSA  
Australian Catholic  
Students Association

Via Veritas Vita

1 October 2021

*Memorial of St Thérèse of Lisieux, Virgin and Doctor of the Church, Patroness of Australia*

### **To the Fathers and Delegates of the Plenary Council**

Dear friends in Christ,

The Australian Catholic Students Association (ACSA) is Australia's oldest and largest movement of young Catholics. On behalf of our members and alumni we would like to communicate our prayers for your success as well as outline our chief concerns. We take this opportunity to say with candour that the perceptions seen in many of the submissions to the Council are not ours. We crave *not* a Christ altered for the modern world, but the *eternal resurrected Christ* for the world as the only antidote to its afflictions.

#### *WHAT IS A PLENARY COUNCIL?*

A Plenary Council is an opportunity for the local Church to discern how to live the Gospel in the context of a particular time and place. Australia—with its rich heritage dating back to the dawn of time as well as its multicultural modern face—is yearning for the truth and purpose only Christ can give. The Council is certainly an opportune moment to discern the needs of modern Australia and strategise without degenerating to empty bureaucracy, so strongly condemned by Pope Francis, ways to evangelise into the 21st century. It is not an opportunity to present a new Gospel or a new Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the same Yesterday, Today and Forever (Hebrews 13:8). Furthermore, Christ is *Truth Himself*, and the fundamental role of the Church—that charity of bringing souls closer to Truth—cannot be ignored. The Church exists to save souls, all its other missions and services must be subordinated to this primary one.

#### *WHAT DO YOUTH LONG FOR?*

In all humility, but with the force and ardour of our youth, recalling the words of St Paul to St Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12) we cannot but decry the submissions made to the Council to, in effect, destroy the Church. We acknowledge that many submissions sought ways to bring Christ to our neighbour in good faith. Nevertheless, many submissions sought to change teachings of the Faith solemnly defined by the Magisterium relating to issues of sexuality, life, or other moral issues and show a lack of faith in the Church and her Divine Founder.

These submissions only confirm the crisis in faith and faith formation; that is, many Catholics lack basic catechesis and are unjustly deprived of the truths of the Church. We call upon the Plenary Council to *show its unity* with the successor of Peter and the perennial teaching of the Church by condemning these submissions as its first action.

*TRUTH AND HOLINESS, NOT POWER*

Similarly, and intimately related to this crisis of faith, is seeing the Church through a paradigm and dialectic of power. Clericalism, so strongly condemned by the Holy Father, or laity seeking to supplant clergy from their God ordained—literally—role to serve the Church. We call upon the council to *clearly delineate* the complementary nature of the lay and clerical vocations as foreseen by the Second Vatican Council. Laity are called to act as a leaven in the world, the clergy are to pass on the deposit of faith in all its integrity—which is so sorely needed in the modern world (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 31 and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2).

*CUM PETRO ET SUB PETRO*

We can only note that Pope Francis and each of his predecessors back to the fisherman Peter have held this faith, many of whom shed their blood rather than see it sullied or changed. Together with them, by virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation, we affirm our faith in Christ and His teaching as *the only solution* for the ills of humanity. *Only* when Christ reigns in our hearts and in society as King can we truly be free. He cannot reign in the world if He does not reign in His Church. Christ was not some itinerant preacher seeking only to comfort the people of His day, He is the eternal Son of God apart from Whom *no one* can be saved.

*EVER ANCIENT, EVER NEW*

We take this opportunity to thank each of the fathers and delegates for their generosity in giving their time to this important work at the service of the whole Church. We ask that a sincere and sober look at the state of the Church in Australia and the world be taken. Approaches to the Faith which minimise the supernatural and threaten to render the Church of God just another NGO have resulted in a marked fall in Church attendance, marriages, and celibate vocations. As scandalous as they are, there is nothing in the aforementioned submissions which has not been tried either by various communities in the Church or in other ecclesial communities. The deleterious effects of these false ways are a matter of public record; the communities who follow them will shortly be extinct. What is needed is *not a desacralisation of the Faith* but an interior conversion both on the individual and community level, from which we are not exempt. We direct this call to conversion firstly to ourselves. Let us return to Christ, let us live our faith prophetically and authentically. Let us proclaim the Gospel boldly and without shame.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

*The undersigned members and alumni of the Australian Catholic Students Association*

## **Signatories**

Claudia Tohi - President of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Elio Haddad - Vice President of the Australian Catholic Students Association, President of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
Mary Park - Secretary of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
James Lu - Treasurer of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Harvey Inamac - Victorian Chairperson of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Magdalena Fernandez - NSW Chairperson of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Ratchata Panyadong - Tasmanian Chairperson of the Australian Catholic Students Association, Founder of Catholic Student Fellowship of Tasmania (CSFT)  
Angelo Pardo - Alumni Officer of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Fr Paul Rowse OP - National Chaplain of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Alexander Kennedy - Former President of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Christopher Wilks - Former President of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Damian Wilks - Former President of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Andrew O'Shea - Former Vice President of the Australian Catholic Students Association  
Phillip Brooks - Former President of UTS Catholic Society, Former Treasurer of ACSA  
Mia Zelesco - President of the University of Melbourne Catholic Society  
Lydia Daniel - Committee Member of University of Melbourne Catholic Society  
Dominika Pasztetnik - Committee Member of University of Melbourne Catholic Society  
Vincent Tang - President of the Australian National University Catholic Society  
Alexander Bajer - Treasurer of the Australian National University Catholic Society  
Nathan Boninsegni - President of Monash Catholics  
Tia Vechoorettu - Vice President of Monash Catholics  
Joseph Vechoorettu - Treasurer of Monash Catholics  
Thuy (Teresa) Tran - Secretary of Monash Catholics  
Joseph Tong - General Representative of Monash Catholics  
Joel Perera - General Representative of Monash Catholics  
Alessandro Sobral - Vice President of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
Vanessa Tamer - Vice President of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
Joseph Hoffmann - General Executive of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
Katherine (Ka Lam) Li - General Executive of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
Brendan Hassan - Secretary of the Macquarie Catholic Society  
Rory O'Connor - General Executive of the Macquarie Catholic Society  
Monica Axiak - President of the UTS Catholic Society  
Benjamin Frasco - Treasurer of the UTS Catholic Society  
Murielle Abou Karam - Secretary of the UTS Catholic Society  
Nathan Bartolo - President of the University of Wollongong Catholic Society

Ellie Hobba - Secretary of the University of Wollongong Catholic Society  
 Alessandra Sarmiento - Secretary & Founder of Our Lady of Fátima Catholics Society Deakin  
 Alexander Wong - Treasurer, St Benedict's Association of Young Adults (SBAYA)  
 Sandrine Tobias- Former President of Our Lady of Fátima Catholics Society Deakin Burwood  
 Teresa Bernardo - Former President of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
 Fiona Choi - Former Vice President of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
 Julen Reyes - Former Vice President of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
 Stephen Peterson - Former Secretary of the Sydney University Catholic Society  
 John Gallimore - Former President of the Macquarie University Catholic Society  
 Patrick O'Shea - Former President of the Macquarie University Catholic Society  
 Nathan Porter - Former President of the University of Melbourne Catholic Society  
 Br Oliver Bajon OP - President of the Catholic Theological College SRC  
 Fr Mannes Tellis OP - ANU Chaplain  
 Fr Robert Krishna OP - Monash University Chaplain  
 Fr Laurie Foote OP - USYD Chaplain  
 Beth Wells - Former USYD Chaplaincy Staff  
 Alison White - Treasurer, Dominican Laity, Prochapter of St Mary Magdalen

Jeremy Mann	Ezekiel Hangan	Bethany Marsh
Nick Fontyn	Alexander Fletcher	Josh Francisco
Damien de Pyle	Anna Schellekens	Matthew Couch
Frederick Maroun	Aaron Smith	Aaron James Wood
Sylvia Kiconco	Luke Dalle Nogare	Nicholas Beaton
Samuel Caliph	Alexandra Dooley	Elizabeth Sebastian
Daniel Michael	Lucas McLennan	Joseph Mabilog
Anitra Yu	Veronica Smith	Nicholas Barry
Adil Alvares	Rendy Satrio	Lachlan Gower
Gregory Johnson	Theresa McLaurin	Kieran Mesquita
Andrew Kennedy	Shalindra	Chiara Catanzariti
Richie Dantas	Chandrawanka	Joshua Gereis
Ryan Coelho	Alexander Ross	Hanna Vine
Gerard Nicholls	Alexander Leach	Nicholas Morlin
Rocelle Aresgado	Andrew McLaurin	Matthew Lennon
Vu Thien Phuc Phan	Gretam Kratochvil	Joseph Mabilog
Michael Rodgers	Tushar Ramesh	Allan McManus
Andrew Kennedy	Mattias Seisdedos	Patrick Meehan
Brandon Dahdah	Jeremy Boland	Michael Cusack
Seth Norton	Varun Perera	Evelyn Yu
Matthew Ramirez	Alexander McGrath	Dylan Soesman
Damian Lawrence	Ariel Casanova	Petar Majetic
Ryan Attard	Tom Perry	Noelle Panlilio
Michael Seselja	Elisa Perry	Marcia Halim
Stephanie Johnson	Jennifer Shi	Gerard Wehbe
Liam Milross	Kanishka Perera	Adriana Hunter
Angela Niklason	Kiara Lim	Mary Daher
Felicity Carolan	Matthew D'Souza	Luka Casey