



MEDIA RELEASE

WATAC TO HOST GATHERING OF WOMEN MEMBERS OF PLENARY COUNCIL

Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) in partnership with Australian Catholic University (ACU) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) have invited women members of the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia to a gathering which will enable them to meet each other for conversation and sharing in the leadup to the Plenary Council.

Andrea Dean, President of WATAC noted that “of the members listed to attend the Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in 2021-2022 less than one-third are women.”

“As many of the women are from a range of backgrounds and locations, many will have had little opportunity to connect with each other and share their ideas as women. This is a very different situation from that of male participants, many of whom meet regularly in various forums of clergy and bishops’ conferences, or work in church offices.”

Anne Walker, National Executive Director of CRA said, “This opportunity encourages women members of the Plenary Council to explore and discuss issues that are relevant and important within the Church. These women have a diverse range of perspectives, and lived experiences of being a Catholic woman in the Church today. I expect a variety of reflections on the question *‘What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?’* The collective intelligence and wisdom of these women are gifts to the Church. Together, this event aims to provide a space that will be open and respectful to allow for frank and courageous conversation.”

The gathering is to take place at the North Sydney campus of the Australian Catholic University on Thursday, April 29 2021; the feast of St Catherine of Siena.

Professor Dermot Nestor, Executive Dean for the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at ACU said the event, which would include a virtual connection and breakout groups, along with time for prayer and reflection, “would provide an important and timely opportunity for women members to get to know each other personally and to have collective and coordinated conversation.”

It is hoped that the women who attend and participate will move forward with a fuller appreciation of the gifts that they, as women members, bring to the discerning processes of the Plenary Council.

There is the possibility for women council members to gather in the future if it is desired.

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