



## PRESS RELEASE

### AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS PEN OPEN LETTER TO SYNOD ON YOUTH ASKING FOR FORMATION, CLARITY AND THE DIVINE OFFICE

**Australia, 17/10/18.** The Australian Catholic Students Association (ACSA) has circulated an open letter addressed to the Synod Fathers gathered in Rome for the Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment.

The letter is signed by over 200 tertiary students and young alumni of ACSA, drawn from student 28 tertiary institutions Australia. It calls for a renewed focus on the formation of the young before they shape the Church: *“We need a reliable moral compass. For this, the young need to be well-formed in the truth. We cannot shape the Church when we are not formed. Formless minds will manifest a shapeless Church, constantly evading the truth.”*

The letter also criticises deliberate ambiguity in statements by some senior prelates: *“When the Church eschews the truth for policy-speak, young people are left with only superficial banalities to express their beliefs. Deliberately unclear words are, ironically, relied on and repeated with rigidity. The Church should not discourage young people following its rules in love, nor its priests from teaching them.”*

The letter addresses Archbishop of Sydney Anthony Fisher’s [apology](#) in his Synodal intervention for “unbeautiful or unwelcoming liturgies”: *“In bringing the Mass down to our level of comfort, we turn a profound claim physically manifested in a glimpse of heaven, into a weird claim which people struggle to take seriously.”* The letter suggests that the Mass is not the point to welcome people into the Church, but that the Divine Office could be far more accessible: *“Imagine the widespread practice of vespers in the same vein as [the Community of Sant’Egidio’s evening prayer](#), encountered by so many young people and pilgrims in Rome at the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere. A warm, candle-lit refuge from the world, passers-by wander in, clueless, are handed a psalm book by a kind hand, and then gently guided by the community in prayer.”*

The President of ACSA, Christopher Wilks, said that the letter is important “because in Australia, young people know intuitively that there’s more to their faith, but feel they’re missing out on the full picture. The Synod Fathers often talk about privilege. It’s important that Synod Fathers, and the clergy generally, don’t remain the privileged few who have been exposed to the fullness of truth through spiritual formation and study. We can’t deny the young that inheritance and replace it with empty talking points.”

The letter was composed because young Catholics in Australia wanted their voices heard. Mr Wilks said that ACSA members were inspired by their own Australian shepherds, and the [example](#) of young Scottish faithful in their letter of 28 September 2018.

Ends.

For Further information:

Christopher Wilks

President, Australian Catholic Students Association

Email: [president@australiancatholicstudents.org](mailto:president@australiancatholicstudents.org)

Phone: 0431 930 466

The statement can be found: <https://www.facebook.com/australiancatholicstudents/?ref=bookmarks>