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ACU partners with Harvard to examine the good life

Australian Catholic University's Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry is partnering with Harvard University on an international conference that aims answer the perennial question: how do we live our best life?

The inaugural [Makarios conference](#) will be hosted at ACU's Rome campus. Makarios is a Greek word which appears in the New Testament and can be translated as "happy" or "fortunate".

The conference will explore Christianity, character and virtue, and how this informs the concept of human flourishing, or the ability to live a good life.

It will bring together around 50 scholars worldwide from theology, philosophy, history, and the social sciences.

Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry (IRCI) Acting Director [Associate Professor Michael Champion](#) said the conference was part of an ongoing collaboration with Harvard University, Boston College, and Baylor University.

"We hope to continue our partnership and build on significant international research about the cultural determinants of human flourishing," Associate Professor Champion said.

"We aim to draw on ancient and contemporary thinking to enrich lives around the world."

IRCI Research Fellow [Dr Matthew Crawford](#) is the conference organiser and said the collaboration with several US universities had grown out of a five-year research project, Flourishing in Early Christianity.

"The conference expands it beyond its original confines by considering other historical periods and approaches to human flourishing, including philosophy and psychology," he said.

"We hope to bring distinctive theological, historical, and literary approaches to bear on this problem to inform, reframe, expand, and transform current thinking."

Associate Professor Champion said the Rome Campus was an indispensable part of

IRCI's research strategy, providing a location where ACU scholars can collaborate with academics from Europe and North America.

“There is no way a conference of this scale could have happened in Melbourne due to the additional cost of travel to Australia, so using the Rome Campus makes this possible,” he said.

“With this event we are also making connections with various other higher education institutions in Rome itself, which is central to the University's mission.

“We also hope, over time, that the research events at the Rome Campus will enrich student experience – we're planning training for HDR students with international partners and we hope to extend that to Honours students.”

[The Makarios Conference](#) is a joint undertaking of the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry (IRCI) at Australian Catholic University, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, the Lonergan Institute and the Colloquy in Historical Theology at Boston College, and the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University.

It will be held at the ACU Rome campus from 26-28 May and keynote speakers include the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

Associate Professor Michael Champion and Dr Matthew Crawford are available for interview. The conference program can be downloaded [here](#).

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