



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Bishops welcome Youth Festival as opportunity for growth in faith

The 2025 Australian Catholic Youth Festival has been hailed as an opportunity to encounter Jesus and grow the next generation of leaders.

Representatives from the Festival gave a presentation to the plenary meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on May 6.

The bishops, meeting at Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney, heard from Teresa Rhynehart, the Festival director, who is also the Archdiocese of Melbourne's director of mission.

Ms Rhynehart invited them to take part in the Festival, and in turn encourage families, young people and clergy to consider attending.

“It is about entering into a space, or place, in which young people can encounter Jesus in some way – either for the first time or for the fifth time,” she said.

“It is a space for young people to encounter each other. Being able to gather together in community is a really powerful experience - to see that they are not alone.

“They will experience different forms of prayer, new ways of worship and being Catholic.

“And it's opportunity to listen – for leaders to listen to young people and to engage in that dialogue and response.”

The ACYF is a three-day event bringing together thousands of young people, aged from Year 9 to 25, from across Australia.

To be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from November 30 to December 2, the Festival will include talks, prayer experiences, Mass, workshops, forums, live concerts, games, a justice activity centre, and an interactive expo.

Parishes and communities will be required to register as a group.

Families can coordinate a small group of siblings and friends to go together, with parents or responsible young adults as group leaders.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President and Archbishop of Perth Timothy Costelloe SDB, said hosting the Festival in 2019 had generated “enormous enthusiasm” among young people.

“Many of our young people are relatively isolated in their parish, but to go to the Youth Festival gives them a sense of being part of something very big, useful and life-giving,” he said.

“The seeds were sown for some very positive initiatives.”

Archbishop of Melbourne Peter Comensoli said the Festival was about four things: growth, hope, confidence and leadership.

“I’ve seen extraordinary growth in faith and belonging amongst a good number of those who went (to the previous festival in Perth),” he said.

“Often this is their first experience of a faith encounter in a way that says to them ‘I belong to this. I belong in this Christian faith and the church.’”

He said many young people from Melbourne who went to the Perth festival had come back with a sense of “missionary energy” and taken on youth leadership roles.

The ACYF began as an initiative of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in 2013.

Information on the Festival can be found at acyf.org.au

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