

From Light to Bridge: Voices of Hope Resonate at the Mission: one heart many voices Conference

Today, the Mission: One Heart Many Voices (MOHMOV) conference officially opened in Sydney. With over 300 participants gathered for the three-day event, the conference brings together people from across Australia and from diverse backgrounds.

The theme for the 2025 conference is: Choosing Hope. Trust yourself to its leading. This theme was chosen to connect with the Jubilee Year focus: Pilgrims of Hope.

The opening ceremony began with a powerful Welcome to Country led by Isaac Bamblett, a Bundjalung and Wiradjuri man.

“Today, it is important to be here and be spiritually connected. While it’s meaningful to do the Acknowledgment on video, it’s just as important to have someone physically come in and give a deeper spiritual and physical dimension to the moment,” shared Isaac.

The morning continued with prayers and songs, setting the tone for the first keynote session, delivered by Estela Padilla, Theologian and Member of the Synod on Synodality. Her address, titled “Searching your hope, trusting to its leading – Why be a Pilgrim of Hope?” explored the spiritual and practical dimensions of hope.

Estela reflected on the synodal journey between local communities and the Universal Church, and how hope emerges through personal, communal, and global experiences, describing hope as something that can take many forms including a rock and a bridge.

“My first description of hope is light inside of you... this light go through your cracks of darkness, this light pushed me to breaking free,” said Estela.

Following this, Anna Cody, Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner, addressed the theme of Choosing. She spoke candidly about the ongoing reality of sexual abuse in Australia, particularly among marginalised groups such as migrants and LGBTQI+ individuals, and emphasised how creating safe spaces for people in distress can spark real change and build a safer future for all.

In the afternoon, participants attended a range of workshops. These included reflections on applying synodal principles in local Church contexts, led by Kelly Paget, Head of Mission and Chancellor of the Diocese of Broken Bay, as well as sessions on incorporating Theory U and synodality into dialogues around First Nations representation in truth-telling, led by Jenny Collins-White, Associate Director of Mission Formation at Catholic Mission.

Throughout the day, attendees were invited into moments of quiet reflection and meaningful encounter, fostering deep, heartfelt connections at the centre of the MOHMOV experience.

The conference continues through to Wednesday, with more keynote addresses and highlights still to come.

ENDS

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About Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.