

MEDIA RELEASE

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Geraldine Doogue reveals the secret to a “strong and supple” Australia at interfaith breakfast

Friendship is the “secret sauce” when it comes to building a society that embraces diversity and interfaith dialogue, award-winning journalist Geraldine Doogue has said.

The veteran broadcaster made her comments at the ninth annual Federal Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast co-hosted by Australian Catholic University and Speaker of the House of Representatives Milton Dick MP on 25 November, 2025.

Speaking to nearly 250 parliamentarians and notable faith and community leaders, including His Eminence Cardinal Mykola Bychok CSsR, Ms Doogue said the way forward for interreligious relations was friendship, quoting one of the Catholic Church’s preeminent leaders in Christian-Muslim dialogue.

“Cardinal Michael Louis Fitzgerald, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, is obsessed with friendship as a way forward for interreligious relations,” Ms Doogue said.

“He cited the example of young French people who for a few weeks come to Marseille from all over France to spend time in that fascinating city’s northern districts: they might arrive, as he says, with pre-conceived ideas about Islam but ‘they leave with Muslim friends....and that changes everything’.

“I truly think that friendship is the secret sauce to all this.”

As the former host for 20-years of Compass, ABC TV’s flagship religion, ethics and belief programs, Ms Doogue said people of “developed traditions” were often more collaborative and available for an exchange of ideas than those who were “unknowing”.

The challenge for those committed to interfaith dialogue today was making this openness to faith exchange and dialogue a mainstream habit. This was particularly necessary in 2025, the 60th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s landmark declaration on interreligious dialogue, *Nostra Aetate*.

Ms Doogue offered three key steps to making interfaith dialogue accessible to those who have not developed the necessary language or interest.

“I do think that strengthened faith traditions, together with fully explored digital world connections that are increasingly being recognised as providing real sustenance, is a key need, to encourage sturdiness,” Ms Doogue said.

“Then to encourage the respect for others that flows from confident, regular attachment to a heritage and body of beliefs, that feels viable, across generations and genders.

“Then to invest in shared spaces, where food, laughter and music all play their incomparable role, things like community festivals, writers festivals, celebrations that are repeated and become resilient, institutions like the Australian Catholic University, our host today.”

Acknowledging that society was going through “a change of era not merely an era of change” Ms Doogue said traditions with “clear, developed roots and moorings” were “possibly the best positioned to survive, maybe even thrive” in today’s complex world.

“We’re not asked to retreat from this bewildering world, even though we might welcome it sometimes: we’re sent out to converse with it,” Ms Doogue said.

“Courage is one of the Holy Spirit’s pre-eminent gifts - let’s use it with confidence.”

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said the Federal Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast had become a cornerstone of ACU’s commitment to dialogue about the vital role religion plays in the Australian community.

“For more than a decade, this event has stood as a testament to the foundation of trust, dignity and love that underpins our democracy, reaffirming our embrace of the multitude of cultures and faiths that define Australian life,” Professor Skrbis said.

“But the interfaith breakfast is more than symbolic. It is active and participatory, and it requires something small of each of us.”

ACU has hosted nine parliamentary interfaith breakfasts since 2014. This is the second year that the interfaith breakfast coincides with a milestone anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

Additional photos available on request.

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