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MEDIA RELEASE

“Be searchers of an eternal horizon”: Archbishop Comensoli commissions youth as Festival ends

In a concluding Mass that saw the Melbourne Youth Orchestra and the Choir of Trinity College Melbourne accompany the liturgy with a glorious and specially composed fanfare and musical setting, courtesy of local composer Mary Finsterer, Archbishop Peter A Comensoli sent the 6,000 young participants forth as pilgrims of hope and “the Spirit’s new shoots.”

Archbishop Comensoli urged the young pilgrims to nurture the life of the Holy Spirit within that contrasts with the lack of hope experienced by so many.

“In a world that often trades in distrust, anxiety and the fear of not fitting, the Spirit has been growing in you,” he said.

“Mercy instead of refusal, listening instead of shouting, serving instead of influencing.”

Reflecting on the Gospel of Luke, in which Jesus rejoices over the faith of “the little ones”, he encouraged everyone present.

“Jesus was rejoicing over people like you. Not because you have everything sorted out, but because you have set out on the journey with Him—open-hearted, on the way, willing to be saints among the saints of God’s pilgrim people.”

“The socials algorithm says: remake yourself. Jesus says: be happy among the little ones who know they are loved and who belong.”

“Be searchers for an eternal horizon, not a shrunken enclosure,” Archbishop Comensoli said in his closing words. “Go out to greet Him—Jesus is waiting to welcome you.”

The tone of the final day of the Festival was markedly different from the previous days.

Prefacing the busyness of the activities, workshops and bishops X-Changes—a unique feature that provided an opportunity for young people to enter conversation with the bishops on important topics of faith and culture—was a full-pilgrim experience of Eucharistic adoration.

In the more contemplative atmosphere, Bishop Mark Edwards OMI of Wagga Wagga guided the young pilgrims, inviting them to let the Lord into their hearts.

“Give Him your whole heart,” he said. “Let Him rearrange the furniture of your soul. That’s how the great adventure of giving your life to God begins.”

At the conclusion of Mass, Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP extended a formal invitation to all to attend the 2028 ACYF, which would form a ‘crucial strand’ of the International Eucharistic Congress (IEC).

“Look around you,” he said, after thunderous applause. “There are 6,000 of you here for this festival. Now multiply that in your imagination by 10 to 60,000, then multiply that by 10 more to 600,000. How's that for a goal?”

“Over these days, we’ve had something powerful moving among you. A hunger for God, the courage to seek him, the joy in finding him have been tangible, unmistakable signs of the Holy Spirit at work in this country. More than a feeling and enthusiasm and experience, something is being awakened in our Church, in our land.”

“Everything you experienced this morning in Adoration, everything at this beautiful Mass,” he went on, “everything throughout our days together—the faith and idealism, the meaning and purpose, the closeness to each other and to God, all flows from one source and one source only: Jesus Christ.”

Archbishop Fisher encouraged the young pilgrims to grow in their Eucharistic faith, to participate in the pilgrimages and processions and catechesis of their local communities, and to prepare well ahead of time for the 2028 combined ACYF and IEC experience.

‘[Jesus] is most intimate with us in his Eucharist,” he said. “The Eucharist is not just a symbol. It is an encounter with the living Christ, His flesh and blood, His body and soul, His humanity and divinity. All for you, everything He is.”

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