

# MEDIA RELEASE



Polding Centre  
133 Liverpool Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

**9 December 2017**

## **Catholic Youth Called to be Spiritual Heroes**

The Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) concluded with a jubilant outdoor Mass in Sydney's Domain tonight in front of a 15,000-strong congregation from across Australia - the largest Catholic event the country has seen since World Youth Day 2008.

The Mass, celebrated by Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP and concelebrated by 30 bishops, also served to launch the Year of Youth, a year-long calendar of events and focus on the youth of Australia, which was called by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to mark 10 years since World Youth Day 2008.

As the sun set on a warm Sydney summer's evening, Archbishop Fisher said: "This is a year for the whole Church to hear, reflect with and draw inspiration from our young people, to renew our service to them, and to draw them ever more closely into the life and outreach of the Church."

Young pilgrims began streaming into The Domain from 3pm on foot from North Sydney, where they had visited the shrine of St Mary Mackillop, Australia's first saint. While waiting for the Mass to begin, they sang and danced to an open-air concert featuring international artists Steve Angrisano, Emily Wilson and nine-time Grammy nominee Matt Maher, and local priest and recording artist, Father Rob Galea.

During his homily, Archbishop Fisher said there had never been a greater time to call on young Catholics to be spiritual heroes of their faith.

"For all the good things Australia has going for it, our national politics is a shambles; our culture messed up about life and love, justice and mercy; and no one could be proud of our record with the First Australians, with asylum seekers, or with modern forms of slavery," he said.

"Things are sliding in our culture and going forward Christians may not be as influential or even welcome as they used to be. Christians won't be carried by the culture anymore; they'll have to decide for themselves.

"If ever we needed new John the Baptists to call people to repent and believe, to offer some really Good News amidst all the bad, and to point people to Christ, it's right now. Never in history have you been more necessary, my young friends. Never have young people had more opportunities to be heroes."

The Mass capped off an amazing three-day festival held at Sydney's Olympic Park, during which young people energetically and fully participated in concerts and talks, workshops and worship and were challenged to make a difference to their community and the world.

Youth Ambassador Andrew Kennaugh, said the highlight of the festival was a simple workshop on prayer from 70-year-old Sister Hilda Scott OSB. "Near everyone was in tears," he said.

At the end of Mass the skies over The Domain lit up with a spectacular firework display.

The next ACYF will be held in Perth in 2019.

Key festival events are available on demand at [www.xt3.com/acyf2017/live](http://www.xt3.com/acyf2017/live)

***For further information:***

***Anita Quigley***

***Director of Catholic Communications & News Media***

***Archdiocese of Sydney***

***Phone: (02) 9390 5313***

***Mobile: 0421 612 978***

***Email: [anita.quigley@sdneycatholic.org](mailto:anita.quigley@sdneycatholic.org)***

