



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## **World Youth Day is a catalyst for renewal in youth ministry, Australian bishops say**

### **Media Release**

**26 July 2016**

World Youth Day in Sydney changed the landscape of youth ministry nationally, the Australian bishops said today during a national gathering of Australian pilgrims currently participating at World Youth Day (WYD) events in Krakow, Poland.

Today, the Australian Bishops joined more than 3,000 young people at a national Australian gathering during WYD Krakow that included a launch of the [‘Year of Youth’](#), building on the legacy of World Youth Day 2008 (WYD08).

The Year of Youth will celebrate the tenth anniversary of World Youth Day, Sydney and highlight how the Australian Church continues to tell the story of WYD08 in its local ministry.

Bishop Mark Edwards, Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Youth and an MC at the national gathering said, ‘The years of preparation leading up to World Youth Day 2008 (WYD08) and its events have changed the landscape of youth ministry leaving a lasting impression on the Church. Local youth ministries have grown and diversified. The number of youth ministers has increased along with diocesan support structures.

Speaking during a press conference after the gathering, Malcolm Hart, Director of the Australian Catholic Bishops, Office for Youth, said, ‘the Year of Youth utilises the anniversary of WYD08 to highlight the impact a concerted effort and focus on young people can have in the life of the Church’.

‘The Australian bishops have established a three year cycle of events to support and sustain youth ministry into the future, this includes: support and participation in World Youth Day’s, the engagement of a new generation of young Catholics through the Australian Catholic Youth Festival and increased training and formation of those working with young people through the Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Convention,’ Hart explained.

Following WYD08, the bishops established the Australian Catholic Youth Council, as a strategic advisory body, and created an Office for Youth to implement the Australian bishops vision for youth ministry, *Anointed and Sent*.

Commencing the [Year of Youth](#) in Sydney, the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in December 2017 will be the largest national gathering of the Catholic Church in Australia with an expected attendance of 15,000.



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‘The challenge for a World Youth Day host city is how to make the event fruitful 10 years on. Australia could well be one of the countries that has leveraged World Youth Day in their own country to the greatest potential,’ Bishop Edwards said.

‘The anniversary of WYD08 provides an opportunity to refocus our commitment to a three year cycle of events setting a new standard for continuously renewing the Church’s mission of evangelisation in young people.’

Half of all Australian Catholic Bishops attended the gathering with special guest His Excellency Paul Wojciechowski, the Australian Ambassador to Poland. Hosted at the Mercy Centre in Tauron Arena, Krakow, the theme of the two-hour gathering was ‘Blessed are the Merciful’ with music, catechesis and testimonials reflecting this theme.

Highlights of the Australian gathering included an inspiring call to action from Bishop Comensoli, an insight into ‘Polish and Australian Spirituality’ by Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green, an inviting homily preached by Bishop Patrick O’Regan and music by Victorian Priest, Fr Rob Galea.

Prayers of the faithful were said in five different languages representing the multi-cultural nature of the Church in Australia.

Bishops Edwards concluded that, ‘during the [Year of Youth](#), it is crucial the Church engages with young people as a priority and re-affirms and sustains its work with them in the spirit of WYD08’.

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