



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Office for Youth

Bishops' Delegate for Youth: Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP

Survey explores young people's hopes and challenges

Media Release

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Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP, the Bishops' Delegate for Youth, says the largest survey of young Catholics ever conducted will further shape the Church's engagement with young people and help the bishops tackle some of the many challenges young people face in contemporary society.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference last year initiated a survey of people aged 16 to 29 as part of international preparations for the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, which will be held in October this year.

More than 15,000 young people responded "passionately and earnestly", Archbishop Fisher said, with the survey results highlighting some of their key concerns: mental health issues; questions around identity – ethnic, spiritual and sexual; loneliness; relationships and friendships; the direction of society, politics and the Church; and living out their faith in a secular world.

"These are big issues that affect us all and they are all things about which the Church cares deeply and on which it has much to say," Archbishop Fisher said.

"Even amidst the challenges raised in the survey, there is cause for great hope. For millennials, there has never been a more important time to rededicate themselves to the message and life of Jesus Christ. 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 is right now.

"Never in history have young people been more necessary. Never have young people had more opportunities to be the spiritual heroes our nation and our world needs."

Trudy Dantis, director of the Pastoral Research Office, which conducted the survey, said the overwhelming response from young people created rich data that can help the Church understand where its ministry is bearing fruit and where additional efforts might best be directed.

"It's clear that many young people highly value what the Church has done for them and is doing for them, while others were willing to share their disappointment in the Church, which is sometimes harder to capture and analyse," Dr Dantis said. "This survey sought to really listen to what young people are saying.

"The bishops and all who work in the Church will better understand the views of young people after considering the findings of this survey and assessing how they can renew and energise the Church."

Malcolm Hart, director of the ACBC's Office for Youth, said the youth survey will help inform the Church's ongoing ministry to young people through schools, parishes, youth groups, ethnic communities and other less formal settings.

"We heard that many young people enjoy gathering in a structured setting, like Mass and liturgical events, others liked the 'big event' approach to their faith and others still preferred the casual nature of meeting in cafes and pubs to consider the big faith and life questions," Mr Hart said.

"The Church wants to continue to engage with young people wherever they choose to gather and help be a focal point for their personal and spiritual growth."

Access the Australian Catholic Bishops' Youth Survey at: www.catholic.org.au/youthsurvey