

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



• MELBOURNE, VICTORIA •

30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025 •

Key ACYF updates – September 2025

With the Australian Catholic Youth Festival fast approaching, updates on key elements of the Festival will be provided by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (the host Diocese) at regular intervals. We encourage dioceses, schools, parishes, youth groups, university chaplaincies and ecclesial movements to share this information widely those bringing a group to the Festival.

Registrations

We are looking forward to welcoming thousands of pilgrims to ACYF later this year, with registrations being received from groups and individuals all across the country! For those yet to register, details about registration packages, payment options, meal inclusions and terms and conditions can be found on the ACYF website [here](https://www.acyf.org.au). Registrations close at the end of October – unless capacity is met earlier, so groups are encouraged to register as soon as possible, to avoid disappointment and assist with planning.

If you have any questions about registrations or the Festival more generally, please do not hesitate to contact the Festival team at: (03) 7064 3995 or: acyf@cam.org.au.

Program

We understand for interstate/regional registrations and for schools issuing camp/excursion forms, the importance of having clear information about the Festival program – particularly the start and finish times of each day. We are delighted to announce our finalised program schedule:

DAY 1 PROGRAM: SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2025	
Morning	Sunday Mass + Lunch: Pilgrims welcomed at parishes across the Archdiocese for Mass. After a self-catered lunch, groups journey to St Patrick's Cathedral.
1.30pm	Welcome to Melbourne Festa: Opportunity to pray with the World Youth Day Cross & Icon and enjoy live performances and activities around the Cathedral grounds.
2.30pm	Official Welcome: Led by the Bishops of Australia, with the World Youth Day Cross & Icon carried out of the Cathedral to take pride of place in the pilgrim walk.
3.00pm	Pilgrimage Walk: With the World Youth Day Cross & Icon through the heart of Melbourne's CBD to the Festival venue.
5.00pm (approx)	Arrival at Venue + Dinner: Opportunity to visit the Expo & Justice Centre, enjoy music and live performances and have dinner.
7.00–8.30pm	Opening Plenary: Featuring a keynote by Archbishop Peter A Comensoli, as well as music, prayer and creative elements.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



• MELBOURNE, VICTORIA •

30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025 •

DAY 2 PROGRAM: MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2025

9.30am	Morning Plenary: With keynote speaker Sr Mary Grace SV, music led by Fr Rob Galea, prayer and creative elements.
11.00am–7.00pm	Expo, workshops, talks, live performances and more: “Choose your own adventure” with hundreds of activities to pick from. Masses celebrated throughout the day.
12.00–2.00pm	Lunch: Pilgrims can take a break and enjoy lunch at their own preferred time.
5.00–7.00pm	Dinner: Pilgrims can enjoy dinner at their own preferred time. A good opportunity for groups to unpack their experiences of the day and share reflections.
7.00–8.30pm	Evening Plenary: With keynote speaker Fr Chris Ryan MGL, music by Louisa Daniels and the house band, along with prayer and creative elements.

DAY 3 PROGRAM: TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2025

9.30–11.00am	Morning Plenary: With keynote speakers Maggie Craig and Bishop Mark Edwards, music led by Fr Rob Galea, Alyssa Agius and Natasha Pinto, followed by Adoration.
11.00am–4.00pm	Expo, workshops, talks, live performances and more: “Choose your own adventure” with hundreds of activities to pick from.
12.00–2.00pm	Lunch: Pilgrims can enjoy lunch at their own preferred time.
4.00–6.00pm	Commissioning Mass: Celebrated by Archbishop Comensoli, marking the official close of the Festival, with pilgrims sent on mission to their own communities.
6.00–7.30pm	Dinner: Pilgrims can enjoy dinner as suits them.

A more detailed version of the program can be found on the ACYF website [here](#).

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



• MELBOURNE, VICTORIA •

30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025 •

Keynote Speakers

A highlight of the Festival program is all pilgrims coming together as one group each day for the main stage plenaries. These sessions provide the opportunity for celebration and learning through music, prayer and keynote addresses from dynamic speakers. We are pleased to share that our confirmed plenary speakers include:

- Cardinal Mykola Bychok CSSR
- Katie Prejean McGrady
- Bishop Mark Edwards OMI
- Sr Mary Grace SV
- Fr Rob Galea
- Maggie Craig
- Fr Chris Ryan MGL
- Joshua Angrisano

Further information about each of these speakers can be found via the ACYF website [here](#).

Workshops

Over 100 interactive and engaging workshops will be on offer at the Festival, allowing pilgrims to “choose their own adventure”, following what sparks their curiosity and speaks to their heart. Pilgrims can explore how to pray, live their faith authentically and wrestle with the big questions of life with wide range of inspiring presenters. Some of the workshops include:

- Surge of the heart: How to pray – Katie Prejean McGrady
- Can real love win? – Melinda Tankard Reist
- The life-changing power of real friendship – Tara Wall & Peter Munns
- Evangelisation at the dawn of AI – Joshua Angrisano
- Being pilgrims of hope for refugees – Kristen Lazarus
- How to hear God’s voice – Sr Mary Grace SV
- How to hope when the world gets dark – Sam Clear

A sample of the workshops on offer, including session descriptions and presenter biographies can be found on the ACYF website [here](#).

World Youth Day Cross and Icon + Pilgrimage Walk

We are thrilled to share that thanks to a special agreement with the World Youth Day (WYD) 2027 organisers, the WYD Cross and Icon will journey to Melbourne to be part of the Festival. The internationally recognised symbols of WYD – the pilgrim Cross and the Icon of Our Lady Salus Populi Romani – were gifted by St John Paul II to young people of the world in 1984. Since then, they have travelled the globe, uniting millions of young Catholics in prayer and reflection. It will be only the second time they have travelled to Australia, following their visit ahead of WYD 2008.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



• MELBOURNE, VICTORIA •

30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025 •

One of the most anticipated highlights of the Festival will be the Pilgrimage Walk on Sunday 30 November, which will see pilgrims journey from St Patrick's Cathedral through the streets of the city to the Festival venue. The Cross and Icon will lead this powerful procession, opening our Festival experience.

Website updates

The Festival website is regularly updated with new information and resources as available. New material recently added includes a FAQ page covering the most frequent questions we have received to date, updated keynote speaker information, the finalised Festival program, a sample of workshops on offer and the volunteering EOI process. Further resources will soon come, including a formation program for group leaders to help their groups prepare practically and spiritually for the Festival. We encourage you to regularly check the website, especially in the weeks ahead.

Other announcements will be made via our Social Media channels so we encourage you to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for the most up to date information and to share this information with your own groups and pilgrims.

Resources available

There are a number of resources available to help Dioceses, parishes and schools prepare for the Festival. The [Resources](#) page of the ACYF website has a variety of different promotional material available for use – including a promo video, posters, flyers and newsletter inserts. Formation resources will be available soon to assist group leaders in preparing their groups both practically and spiritually for the Festival.

Volunteering at the Festival

In order to bring ACYF to life, a dedicated group of volunteers will be needed to support various aspects of the Festival, including logistics, hospitality, liturgy and pastoral care. Volunteering is a great way to support the Festival, young people and the broader Church. Our volunteer workforce expression of interest process is now open and accepting online applications [here](#). We encourage you to share this with anyone who may be interested in volunteering at the Festival.

Expo & Justice Centre

The ACYF 2025 Expo and Justice Activity Centre is a vibrant, interactive hub within the Festival, inviting pilgrims to explore and discern personal vocations through engaging with Catholic organisations, service projects and meaningful dialogue. Through hands-on experiences and representation from a diverse array of Catholic groups, the space aims to inspire young people to embody their discipleship through love, service and mission beyond the Festival itself. The Expo space will include expo stalls, an open stage, games hall and kiosk for lunch and dinner.

With over 70% of our 100 exhibitor spaces already been filled, we encourage those interested in taking part in the expo space to [apply](#) soon, as we anticipate capacity will be met shortly.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



• MELBOURNE, VICTORIA •

30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025 •

Prayer and Chapel spaces

We are pleased to share that there will have dedicated prayer and chapel spaces throughout the Festival. With Masses celebrated in Melbourne parishes on the Sunday of the Festival and a large commissioning Mass on the Tuesday of the Festival, groups will have several options to attend a scheduled Mass in the Chapel on the Monday. Large groups seeking to organise group-specific Masses on the Sunday or Monday are asked to make contact with the Festival team via:

acyf@cam.org.au.

In addition to Mass on the Monday, the prayer spaces will also be available for quiet prayer – including Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the Festival.

Sponsorship opportunities

It has been incredibly heartening to see the level of support from Catholic businesses and organisations who wish to use their resources to support young pilgrims and the broader Church in sponsoring the Festival. We are in the process of finalising our sponsorship arrangements, but welcome discussion with any groups who may be interested in supporting the Festival and the young people who will attend. Further information can be found on our sponsorship page [here](#).

Safeguarding

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne is deeply committed to the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a key responsibility of the Church. This commitment is founded in the teachings and mission of Jesus Christ and lived out with love and justice to ensure the dignity of each human person.

All aspects of the Festival planning place the safety of young people as the focus, from the creation of spaces that are welcoming and safe, the programming, selection of talent and workshop offerings, through to risk management in collaboration with our venue teams.

The full Archdiocesan commitment to safeguarding can read [here](#).

Risk management

Risk management for the Festival is active and ongoing – embedded into every aspect of our planning and decision-making. For groups planning their pilgrimage to ACYF, we advise that risk management is a shared responsibility. It involves not only the event organisers and venue, but also schools, parishes, ministries and other participating groups, who are directly responsible for the young people they bring as pilgrims.

We stress the importance for all pilgrimage groups of appropriate adult-to-young person supervision ratios. It is also important to identify and communicate clear behaviour expectations, proactive supervision and preparedness to respond to medical or other incidents.

We are preparing a publicly accessible Risk Management Overview to assist groups in the development of their own risk register (which will be unique and specific to their travel mode, number of pilgrims, needs of pilgrims etc.). The Risk Management Overview document will outline

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



• MELBOURNE, VICTORIA • 30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025 •

the Festival's overarching approach to managing key risk areas. The Risk Management Overview will be provided, on request, to registered group leaders/coordinators to assist in the planning and preparation for their young people to attend ACYF 2025.

Need to contact us?

If you have a question not answered in this update, we encourage you to contact us via phone: (03) 7064 3995 or email: acyf@cam.org.au so we can do our best to assist you with your enquiry.

The [FAQ](#) section of the Festival website is a handy resource that we encourage groups to refer to.