



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Office for Youth

Bishops' Delegate for Youth: Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP

### Young people urged to "Say Yes" to God - December 7, 2017

Almost 20,000 young people were urged to set the world on fire with their faith as The Australian Catholic Youth Festival got underway in Sydney today.

The Festival kicked off with a Welcome to Country, followed by Canadian Catholic music star Matt Maher blasting the stage in praise of Jesus, and Archbishop Anthony Fisher's opening address.

Archbishop Fisher, the Archbishop of Sydney and Bishops' Delegate for Youth, challenged the young people present to follow the example of Mary and "Say Yes" to the plans God has for their lives and he reminded them of Pope Francis' call for young people not to live as couch potatoes.

"Get up off the couch and you'll be able to see further as well as do more," he said. "And that new horizon that is opened up will be a source of joy for you and for others. Say a Marian YES, an in-God-I-trust YES, a with-all-my-heart YES, a for-today-and-always YES to God and see what He can do with you."

Speaking at a press conference afterwards, Archbishop Fisher said he was enlivened by the faith of the young people on display during the Festival opening.

"It was just wonderful," he said. "The young people were on fire with faith from the very beginning. Right from the start, you sensed the Holy Spirit among them, their love for the Church, and their hopes."

Grammy-nominated Matt Maher, who plays at youth festivals around the world and is in Australia for the third time, said he believes such gatherings help young people to meet their struggle for a sense of identity and belonging.

"To belong to something bigger than yourself, and to ask who am I and what's my place in the world," he said. "All it takes is a few people exhibiting the joy of Jesus and that joy is infectious and gives that sense of belonging and being part of a narrative that's bigger than ourselves."

Archbishop Fisher said his hope for the Festival is that the young pilgrims will have an encounter with Jesus and a conversion of heart that will impact their lives.

"I hope we will be sending 20,000 young people away full of God, on their way to being saints, and ready to change the world," he said. "If our young people can hear, can encounter Jesus Christ in these three days, I think that's very important. I think it's very important that we're having ACYF here at this time in Australia."

ACYF17 Youth Ambassador Melina Koutsoukas, a veteran of previous ACYF's and World Youth Day Madrid, said that Festivals such as this gave young people an opportunity to hear from role models in faith and to develop leadership skills.

"It's also about the relationships, and feeling connected and the friendships you make," she said.

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