

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



SANDHURST PILGRIMAGE

MELBOURNE 2025

29 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS

EDITION #ONE

18 JUNE 2025

IN PARTNERSHIP



**SANDHURST
PARISHES
&
SCHOOLS**



WHAT?

Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) is a national gathering of Catholic young people. The three-day Festival provides young people from across Australia with the opportunity to come together to connect, deepen their relationship with Jesus, be empowered to live their faith in the world and experience the breadth of the Church in Australia.

The Festival will bring together thousands of young people (Year 9 – 25 years of age) from across Australia and will include opportunities for engagement with other young people, school and youth groups, bishops, priests, musicians and speakers.

Each day will include the opportunity to engage in a wide range of activities including prayer, Mass, workshops, talks, live concerts, games, justice activities and an interactive expo.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne will host ACYF at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) from November 30 to December 2, 2025.

Bishop Shane Mackinlay is leading the Sandhurst pilgrimage to ACYF from November 29 to December 3.

The pilgrimage is being coordinated by Claire Spinelli (Sandhurst Youth Ministry Team Leader) and the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Team at the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst (CDOS), in partnership with priests, parishes, Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd Office (CESL) and schools. Harvest Journeys will provide travel and logistical services to support the pilgrimage.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”

Matthew 28:19

The ACYF Pilgrimage experience is part of the Diocesan strategy to lead our young people to an encounter with Jesus and on a journey to missionary discipleship.

CDOS is committed to supporting our young people on this journey with formation and accompaniment, through intentional and well-planned preparation and follow up to ACYF.

ACYF provides an opportunity for both students and young teachers to meet and connect with one another, see that they are not alone on their journey, and that they not only belong within the Sandhurst faith community but also the much larger Catholic community of believers and followers of Jesus across Australia.



PROGRAM

SAT NOV 29

TRAVEL

from Sandhurst to
Queens College, Melbourne

GATHER AND CONNECT
as a Sandhurst Community

DINNER

SUN NOV 30

BREAKFAST

MASS

PILGRIMAGE WALK:
St Patrick's Cathedral through
the streets of the city to the
MCEC

OPENING CONCERT
live music, food and activities
and prayer experiences

MON & TUES

DEC 1 & 2

BREAKFAST

TRAVEL TO MCEC

**MAIN STAGE PLENARY
GATHERING**

keynote speakers, live music,
prayer & connection.

CHOICE

workshops, prayer spaces,
performances, forums, Mass.
Reconciliation, social justice
activities & expo.

**MAIN STAGE PLENARY
GATHERING (Mon)**

**FINAL GATHERING AND
COMMISSIONING MASS**
(Tues)

FINALE CONCERT

WED DEC 3

BREAKFAST

FAREWELL

TRAVEL

back home to Sandhurst



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL

Year 9 –
25 years
plus leaders

FR ROB
GALEA

SR MARY
GRACE SV

KATIE
PREJEAN
MCGRADY

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

ACYF.ORG.AU
@/ACYF25



WHO?

The Sandhurst delegation will include Year 10 and 11 (16/17-year-old) students from Catholic secondary schools and F-12 colleges in our diocese as well students who may not attend a Catholic school but have connected with a parish. Secondary schools are encouraged to send up to 12 students on the pilgrimage.

Adult pilgrims will include accompanying teachers as well as priests, Sandhurst youth ministry leaders, young adults and the guardians of young people under the age of 18, who are not attending with a school group.

Year 12 students should be encouraged by their school to attend, and since they have finished school, connect through their local Parish to attend with the Sandhurst delegation.

We encourage schools to consider sending their younger, early career teachers to accompany the students so they may benefit from the encounter and formational opportunity that the Festival offers. Consideration should also be given to the capacity and experience of the leaders chosen to guide the group and ensure the safety of all students.

HOW?

With the support of the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Team, the CESL Office staff, school principals and leaders from our secondary schools, [year 10 and 11 students will attend the Festival as if they are attending a school excursion.](#)

Resources will be supplied to schools to assist with compliance, including pre-filled risk assessments and activity checklists to reduce the workload for school staff.

Teachers in charge will register their group of students through Harvest Journeys' Booking and Event Management System. Further information regarding registration will follow in a future edition of this information publication.

Safeguarding compliance requires that staff members accompany the students at a ratio of 1:10 with a minimum of two staff attending.

Travel

Coaches will travel from central hubs in [Wangaratta, Shepparton and Bendigo](#) to the accommodation in Melbourne and return. Pilgrims will be responsible for getting to the hub. Schools who are further away from hubs may arrange shared transport for their students from the school to the central hubs and return to school.

[Departure: Saturday, November 29](#)

[Return: Wednesday, December 3](#)

Times and pick up/drop off points to be confirmed in a future edition of this publication.

Accommodation

All pilgrims will be housed at [Queens College University Residence](#) situated in Parkville, Melbourne. This prestigious College boasts impressive grounds and excellent dining and meeting facilities. Each pilgrim will be allocated their own private room, and our pilgrimage party will have access to multiple wings to allow for the safe housing of all our pilgrims in one location. Breakfast will be provided at the College each morning.



Cost

The cost is **\$1450/person**. This includes:

- ✓ Return deluxe coach travel from Bendigo, Shepparton or Wangaratta
- ✓ Accommodation for 4 Nights
- ✓ Breakfast daily (at accommodation)
- ✓ ACYF Melbourne Registration
- ✓ Sandhurst ACYF T-shirt
- ✓ Dinner on Saturday November 29 (at accommodation)
- ✓ Lunch on Sunday November 30 (at accommodation TBC)

This does **not** include:

- ✗ Lunch and Dinner at Festival Sunday November 30 – Tuesday December 2

Schools should also consider Time in Lieu costs for accompanying staff members and CRT replacement in their budgets.

Subsidy

Affordability should not be a factor to determine whether a student is able to attend the Sandhurst ACYF Pilgrimage. Should students need more financial support than is offered by the available subsidies, contact the Youth Ministry Team Leader at CDOS.

The table below outlines the subsidies available for **students in CESL Schools**.

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST	CATHOLIC EDUCATION SANDHURST LTD	SUGGESTED SCHOOL SUBSIDY	SUGGESTED PILGRIM OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSE
\$500	\$100	\$500	\$350 + Meal Expenses

RI/MPJP Schools may receive support from their governing religious institutions. The principals of these schools have been contacted to consider this option.

CDOS will contribute \$500 towards the cost of **all students** and schools are encouraged to match this contribution to support student participation in the pilgrimage.

Schools will be responsible for funding the full cost for accompanying staff members.

Payment

CDOS (through the Chancery) will invoice schools for the cost of their students and staff, less the subsidised portion as per the table below.

Per Student – CESL Schools	\$850
Per Student – RI/MPJP Schools	\$950
Per School Staff – All Schools	\$1450

Schools are responsible for collecting and distributing any additional monies raised through fundraising, from families and provided by religious institutions (where applicable).

FORMATION

An ACYF formation team has been established to support the planning and development of resources and formation opportunities to support the pathway to, and the journey beyond ACYF. This will include formation for both adult leaders and young pilgrims and involve both online and in-person gatherings, resources for schools and individual pilgrims and will be designed around a variety of purposes, e.g., Community and Belonging, Faith Journey, Safeguarding, Preparation for the Pilgrimage Experience, Follow up to the Pilgrimage Experience. Formation co-ordinated by the Diocese is likely to begin in August, but locally led formation of students and staff can start now. More information regarding formation will be provided in a later edition of this publication.

SAFEGUARDING

CDOS, CESL and the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne are committed to ensuring the safety of all participants in the lead-up to ACYF, at the Festival and at all subsequent events. We will work consultatively and in partnership to support best practice in the identification and mitigation of risks for pilgrims of all ages.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. All pilgrims, leaders and guardians are co-responsible for safety at ACYF.

All adult pilgrims and leaders are required to hold a current Working with Children Check and undergo training as part of their formation for the pilgrimage. Safeguarding matters and behaviour expectations will form part of the pilgrimage preparation and formation for ALL PILGRIMS.

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

Pray

The Festival hosts, Diocesan co-ordinators and teams need your prayer as do the potential pilgrims, their teachers and their families as they discern their involvement in the pilgrimage experience. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will accompany us on the journey. Encourage your school communities to pray for the pilgrimage.

Plan

- Consult your finance team about budget and how you are best able to support your students and staff to participate in the pilgrimage.
- Think about fundraising opportunities.
- Contact your religious institutions to request funding support.
- Nominate a staff member to co-ordinate the pilgrimage within your school. Ensure that Claire Spinelli (details on rear cover) has their name and contact details.
- Decide who will accompany your students to the Festival.
- Develop an internal discernment process for selecting/inviting students to join the pilgrimage.

Promote

Get the word out and get your school community excited about ACYF. Promotional resources such as posters, flyers and newsletter banners will be available soon on the CESL School's Portal (Click on the ACYF Tile) and on the CDOS website.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne have released a promo video that you are welcome to share with your school communities to create interest. Ensure that that viewers are aware of the Sandhurst Pilgrimage so that they do not register themselves directly through ACYF.

[An invitation to the 2025 Australian Catholic Youth Festival](#)

Invite

Speak to your Year 10 and 11 students and encourage them to join the Sandhurst Pilgrimage to ACYF.

Contact

If you have not yet done so, email Claire Spinelli to let her know who the best contact is within your school. Otherwise, keep in touch with Claire and let her know how you are going, if you have any questions or if you want to suggest any way that the Youth Ministry Team can support you or your students on the journey to ACYF.

WHAT CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO?

Resources

Resources to support promotion, registration, excursion management and more will be released over the coming weeks and will be available on the CESL Schools' Portal and CDOS website.

Registration

Details of how to register your students and staff will be communicated, and the bespoke Sandhurst booking portal will open **early in July**. Watch out for *ACYF Sandhurst Pilgrimage Information for Schools Edition #2*.

The registration deadline for schools will be in **late August/Early September**. These dates are still being finalised with our travel provider, Harvest Journeys.

Formation

Keep an eye out for key dates and resources to support the formation of our pilgrims and be open to supporting formational opportunities by hosting an event or gathering at your school and supporting your students and leaders in their formation.

Diocesan organised formation in the lead up to ACYF will take place **from August through to November**.

Invoices

The Sandhurst Youth Ministry Team will be in touch seeking the name and contact details of the best person in your school to whom invoices from CDOS should be directed.

You should receive these invoices in **September**.

ENQUIRIES

