

Tuesday, 18 August 2026

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Pope Leo XIV is inviting the young Church to join him at the next International World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea, in August 2027. As part of our ongoing commitment to building ALIVE Catholic Youth, I am delighted to announce that the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle will lead a pilgrimage to this global celebration of faith and onward to Japan.

World Youth Day offers young people a powerful experience of faith, pilgrimage and community. Through encounters with one another and with Christ, pilgrims are strengthened in their relationship with Jesus and inspired to live the Gospel with renewed purpose.

The theme for this World Youth Day comes from John 16:33: "Take courage! I have overcome the world." These words remind us that Christ has conquered fear, sin and death, calling us to live with hope and confidence in His presence.

I have appointed James Camden, Diocesan Director Mission & Evangelisation and Ryan Gato, Head Religious Education & Spirituality, to lead our team as joint Pilgrimage Co-ordinators. Both have extensive experience in preparing and leading faith-based overseas pilgrimages with young people. Their leadership alongside me ensures that after a ten-year hiatus Year 11 (2027) students of the Diocese will be invited to join our parishioners aged 16-35 for this World Youth Day.

Our itinerary will include visits to significant sites connected to the Korean martyrs and saints, offering pilgrims an opportunity to encounter the story of a Church shaped by faith, sacrifice and perseverance. Following World Youth Day, we will travel to Japan, including Nagasaki and Hiroshima, where pilgrims will gather for prayer, reflection and hope at sites of great historical significance.

I ask each parish and school community over the coming months to consider how they might identify and support two to three young pilgrims to attend WYD27.

Potential pilgrims and their families are invited to attend the launch event with the team and I on Tuesday 8 September. We will welcome a first-class relic of Saint Carlo Acutis to the Diocese (a patron Saint of this World Youth Day) and then provide time for further information, Q&A and an overview of the itinerary from 5:30pm-8pm at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Hamilton and the Diocesan Resource Centre.

I pray that our young people, and those who accompany them on this journey, will be transformed by the lives of Saint Andrew Kim Taegon, Saint Carlo Acutis and other WYD Patron Saints as we prepare for and make this pilgrimage.

Take courage! Come and join us.



BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY