

## **Reflection on ACYF from Dimah:**

ACYF has been such a wonderful experience. The talks, exhibitions, and activities helped reveal different aspects of myself and my relationship with God and my relationship with others.

One moment that stood out to me was during the service on the first day, when the World Youth Day cross was brought to the front next to the altar and then raised upright. At that moment, I was struck by the similarities between the cross raised before the church and the cross raised on Calvary. That moment is a reminder to me of what I'm worth, and what God was willing to endure for me. I hope that it also reminds others that the cross did not bring about God's love for us, but rather displayed God's merciful love in all its Glory.

A second thing I really enjoyed at the ACYF was the quiet time in front of the Blessed Sacrament and the World Youth Day Cross. Before this, I was anxious and worried about many things: my future, my past, and the time in between. It was in the silence that Jesus spoke the reassurance in my heart, "all will be well, I am with you always, I will take care of it", and this consolation gave me courage, knowing that when I mess up in the future (and I probably will), God will not leave me in my mess.

I'm also very grateful for the time I spent hanging out with the pilgrims from the Ballarat Diocese outside of the venue and in the hotel. At the end of the day, we played games as a group, joked around, and went out to dinner together. I think this has definitely brought the group closer together. Before this, we knew each other, but were not really friends. While it is sad that I may not see some of them in the near future, I'm grateful for the short time we shared playing games and joking around.

I originally was unsure if I should attend the ACYF. I went back and forth on the decision, and I booked the ticket last minute. I thought it would be a fun experience, hanging out with friends, and listening to talks that could be interesting. I did not know what to expect. Despite this, I was able to encounter God in a profound and comforting way, as the GOD of Mercy and Compassion. The God who comes to us as we are, who meets with us where we are, and does not expect us to climb the ladder of perfection to see him. I hope I live this message out in my life, and be a testimony of it to the world, so that through my life, more would come to him, who is Life itself. I'm very excited about the 2028 ACYF in Sydney, and while I may not be able to bring 100 friends with me, I hope to bring at least one so they can have this wonderful experience.

I was also lucky to be invited to a dinner with the Bishops of Australia in attendance at the ACYF. Two young people were invited from each diocese and I attended this special encounter with Bishop Paul and Elizabeth from Mildura.

The dinner with the Bishops was a very new and interesting experience for me. I intended to get to know the people leading the church, and because of the dinner, I was not only able to do that but also meet and learn more about the young Catholics in the church community, the people Christ has called his own. I feel very blessed to have had that opportunity. Bishop Paul was a very gracious host, and it was great to attend and talk with Elizabeth. I hope that this experience will help me grow more in the Catholic community and help strengthen my relationship with the Church going forward. ACYF and the dinner have inspired me to become more involved in the church, and I want to try to explore this desire and find opportunities to make it grow.