

ACU Theologian is first Australian to join international interfaith program

Australian Catholic University theologian Dr Edmund Chia has become the first Australian invited to join an interfaith program working to overcome international religious conflicts.

Dr Chia has been invited to join 2021 International Fellows Program of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

KAICIID works with the United Nations, the European Commission, the African Union, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, UNESCO and other multilateral organisations to highlight the positive contribution of religious communities, strengthen social cohesion and drive conflict resolution.

Based in Vienna, it is a joint initiative of Austria, Spain, Saudi Arabia and the Holy See. It counts senior Vatican officials such as Cardinal Miguel Ayuso (President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue—PCID) and Archbishop Felix Machado (former Secretary of PCID) amongst its Directors and Advisory Board Members.

The KAICIID International Fellows Program brings together leaders and educators from Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and other religious backgrounds from around the world to promote interreligious and intercultural communication and dialogue. Its aim is to establish an active transnational community of interreligious dialogue practitioners who will act as Ambassadors for Dialogue, especially in the various conflict zones around the world.

Dr. Chia has been engaged in interfaith dialogue for more than thirty years and has published extensively in the field.

"KAICIID has a team of excellent scholars and experts in interreligious dialogue and led by some of the finest of the world's religious leaders. I am really looking forward to sharing with and learning from them. I see an exciting year ahead," he said.

Professor Dermot Nestor, Executive Dean for the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at ACU, said the invitation was an important acknowledgement of the way Australians, and ACU in particular, could contribute to improving interfaith relationships.

"Dr Chia's invitation to participate in the KAICIID International Fellows Program is an important and deserved acknowledgement of his life-long commitment to the project of interreligious dialogue.

"It is also an acknowledgement of the wide-ranging work that has long been undertaken by the Faculty and which constitutes one of the central focus areas of our recently established Research Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council. I congratulate Dr Chia and wish him every success in the significant work that lies ahead."

Dr Edmund Chia is available for interview

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