

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACU celebrates Apostolic Nuncio's service to Australia with honorary doctorate

The pope's ambassador to Australia has accepted an honorary doctorate from Australian Catholic University (ACU) days before his four decades of diplomatic service come to an end.

Archbishop Charles Balvo, the Apostolic Nuncio to Australia since 2022, received a Doctor of the University (*Honoris Causa*) on 17 June at ACU's Brisbane Campus.

The honorary degree recognises Archbishop Balvo's contributions to ecclesial governance, diplomacy, and international relations, and his commitment to Australian Catholic University's mission.

It comes days before the long-serving diplomatic missionary leaves Australia, following Pope Leo XIV's acceptance of Archbishop Balvo's resignation upon turning 75.

Archbishop Balvo said receiving an honorary doctorate from ACU in his final days as Papal Nuncio to Australia was unexpected.

"I feel very honoured to receive the degree, just before I leave Australia to take up a new chapter in my life," Archbishop Balvo said.

"I value very much the educational contribution of Australian Catholic University in its role of promoting the mission of the Church, in the search for the truth on the journey of life."

Having spent the past four years living in Australia, Archbishop Balvo said he would miss the Australian people, their good will, and the nation's vast landscape.

"I have been able to visit many places in this vast country – you would need more than one lifetime to see it all," Archbishop Balvo said.

"People have been friendly and welcoming and have a sense of the common good – they pitch in and help when times are difficult and challenging.

"I will certainly miss them as well as the natural beauty that I have been able to see – from the sand and sea at Bateman's Bay to the snowfields and mountain vistas of Perisher Valley."

Before being sent to Australia, Archbishop Balvo was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand and several Pacific Island nations in 2005 - his was one of the last diplomatic appointments made by Pope St John Paul II, the day before he died.

"The vocation of an Apostolic Nuncio - a representative of the Holy Father - is a missionary vocation, showing a willingness and openness to be a part of his ministry as successor of the Apostle Peter and chief shepherd of the universal Church," Archbishop Balvo said.

"In the words of Pope Leo XIV, 'our role, our ministry is irreplaceable' in the exercise of his own mission."

He has spent a total of 40 years in the Holy See's diplomatic mission – including 21 years as a Papal Nuncio – and served in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

“One highlight has been the experience that I have had of the life of the Church in so many different countries and diverse cultures, united in the Spirit in the bond of peace, with one Lord, one faith and one baptism,” Archbishop Balvo said.

“I have had the privilege of being able to celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice, even on the continent of Antarctica.”

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Archbishop Balvo completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in History from Cathedral College in Douglaston, New York, before leaving for the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He holds a Licentiate and Doctorate in Canon Law.

Ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of New York on 6 June 1976, he served in several parishes before being invited to enter the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1984.

Archbishop Balvo will return to New York next month and take up residence in a parish in Manhattan.

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