



Wednesday August 19, 2026

One week countdown to Christchurch conference

Excitement is building as the Australasian Catholic Press Association (ACPA) prepares for its annual conference and awards dinner in Christchurch, New Zealand next week.

Focussing on Pope Leo XIV's message for the 60th World Day of Social Communications and adopting the theme *Preserving Human Voices and Faces*, almost 50 delegates have registered for the event.

Cardinal John Dew, who was present at the conclave to elect Pope Leo XIV, James Bergin, Catholic Technologist-Digital Ministry Specialist, and Frank Ritchie, a NZ radio broadcaster and media chaplain will be amongst the keynote speakers. Cardinal Dew will be addressing Pope Leo's new Encyclical on matters of communication today and 'Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence'.

The Bishop of Dunedin Michael Dooley will be the main celebrant at the Mass.

The major Platinum sponsors are the Catholic Development Fund (CDF) and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand. Other sponsors are Catholic Enquiry Centre (NZ), Catholic Mission and Catholic Diocese of Christchurch (Gold) and Caritas Australia, Harvest Journeys and CathNews NZ (Silver).

New Zealand's Seifried Estate Winery is donating wine for the conference dinner.

ACPA President David Ahern said it was an exciting line up of speakers. "We are fortunate to have secured some excellent presenters. One of the main themes is around new technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is an area of particular interest to Pope Leo XIV and many who work for Catholic organisations. We don't have to fear AI, but we should be cognisant of the pitfalls.

"We are also blessed that Cardinal Dew, Emeritus Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington, will address the conference, while renowned NZ broadcaster Frank Ritchie has agreed to be the dinner speaker on the Thursday night."

Mr Ahern also thanked the generosity of the sponsors. "They have been incredibly supportive, and we certainly don't take their financial backing for granted, especially the premium sponsors Catholic Development Fund (CDF) and Caritas Aotearoa NZ."

The event will be held at Crowne Plaza on Wednesday and Thursday.

Conference details at ACPA: <https://acpa.asn.au/>