

# From the Last Supper to Father's Kitchen Rules, ACU Melbourne Campus Ministry goes online to support and connect

With most Australian Catholic University (ACU) students and staff working off campus due to government restrictions, the Campus Ministry team is delivering a range of online initiatives to care for the pastoral needs and spiritual wellbeing of the ACU community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACU Melbourne Campus Chaplain, Father Michael Kong said the team realised very early on that the university community would need support through the feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and isolation that the pandemic has brought to our communities.

"There were new challenges and new obstacles, but there were also new opportunities and new ways to reach people pastorally," he said

"It is strange to not have any face-to-face contact with students and staff at campus. However, we had been working on social media to connect with our students and staff before the pandemic. One of example is "The Last Supper," - a livestream session on Facebook where we have a live chat on different issues with students and share a meal each week at a restaurant.

"However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we changed the content and its platform. Now, it is streaming on Zoom, and is called "Father's Kitchen Rules." During the session, we are cooking together while we are having a chat on Zoom. This is a space where students can freely ask any question that they want to discuss.

Father Kong said the ministry team was using different ways of communication to reach different people.

"My main target on social media is those who are not familiar with Catholic faith and culture. I may call my ministry at campus online as 'pre-evangelisation.' At the same time, we are offering some serious faith formation for students and staff who are willing to go deeper," he said.

ACU Campus Ministry Associate (Students), Jake Santitto said: "We have moved all of our ministry online with different activities for students to get involved in each day, from learning to cook at "Father's Kitchen Rules" to discussion groups on a range of topics including the Virtues, C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* as well as a group that just bring students to come together to share how they are going.

"We have also recently organised a weekly "Zoom Mass" where students are able to come together and pray. This has also been a time where one on one pastoral calls have been so vital, being there to support students through an ever-changing time. I have mentioned on many occasions how I have been blown away by the resilience and selflessness of ACU students."

ACU Melbourne Campus Pastoral Associate (Staff), Jeremy Ambrose said: "Our main challenge was to try to build community amongst the staff working from home so that they would continue feeling connected. Amongst some of the new initiatives included, "Meet My Books" - what better way to get to know colleagues then asking them to talk about one of their favourite books? We also tried ACU Film Chat. Through our library's online database, ACU staff have access to a wide range of great movies. We chose one film each week and encouraged all interested staff to watch it and then logon to join us for a discussion.

“Even if staff aren’t able to join us for these initiatives, I think they have still felt connected by knowing they are happening and catching up on some of the videos we post afterwards.

“We also launched a weekly online publication consisting of interviews with staff, reflections on some of the artworks located on campus and reflections via eyes of faith on some of the graces present through this unique time. The hope was to offer something community centred, upbuilding and reflective, perhaps a drop of faith in the ocean of everyday life.

“Based on my own interactions over the last two months I can see a time of strengthening for our ACU community, and both staff and students alike have sought to find ways they can support each other and contribute to the common good of all,” said Jeremy.

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