

ACPA Awards

CONGRATULATIONS Sir John Muria!



**Category 8:
Best Devotional Article applying Faith to Life.
Winner; Voice Katolika: "What is life?" Sir John Muria**

Judges' comments:
Many of the 25 entries in the category were quite outstanding. In the case of the winner, to help the reader to appreciate what God sees as the "purpose and meaning of life", the writer tells a simple and marvellous anecdote about a taxi driver and a poor old woman. It is a beautiful modern parable with the same message of love, compassion and devotion as Christians have forever found in Jesus Christ's story of the Good Samaritan. It is told with

clarity and charm, its lesson not requiring any elaboration.

Fr. Frank Freeman sdb received the Award from Sean Donery, the ABC's Pacific correspondent, on 2nd October, 2008 in Brisbane, Australia



ACPA Conference 2008

-By Dan McAloon

The power of the Internet as a medium for evangelisation and connecting with young Catholics was highlighted at the 52nd annual Conference of the Australasian Catholic Press Association (ACPA).

The Conference was held in Brisbane from 1-3 October. A total 47 delegates included the editors and staff of diocesan and religious publications in Australia and New Zealand, and people working in media and communications roles in the Church.

This year's guest delegate was Ivo Nainoka, Editor of *The Fijian Catholic Monthly*. Ivo described how a staff of two "under less than ideal conditions" produced the official publication of the Archdiocese of Suva. This tabloid newspaper carries stories in both English and Fijian.

With its circulation varying from 7,000-10,000 copies a month, *The Fijian Catholic Monthly* forms a vital faith link to the dispersed population of Catholics spread around the Fijian islands.

During the information session entitled Jumping on the Internet Bandwagon, Gavin Abraham, Editor of *NZ Catholic*, explained how over the past year New Zealand's national Catholic newspaper had evolved its website from being a passive news source to being interactive.

"The inclusion of guest bloggers and our monthly news analysis podcast has seen the number of visitors grow to 4,000 a month", he said. But the Internet could still provide surprises for a Catholic editor. "During World Youth Day Week this number increased a hundred-fold, to 400,000 hits."

He said that being online offered many opportunities for synergies with other Catholic news and information sites. He gave the example of how the *NZ*

Catholic website had had an explosion in readers after being featured by the popular podcaster, Fr Roderick Vonhogen, of the *Daily Breakfast* coming out of The Netherlands.

“We see the Church as being a mirror to the world, hence our move to the Internet where increasingly young people go to get their information,” Gavin said. Engaging with Internet-savvy users was about providing good content in popular forms, he said.

“One concept we are developing is a *Catholic Myth Busters*, able to refute misinformation and present the truth about Catholicism to the ‘Google generation’ who are online and looking for immediate answers to their questions.”

The Internet also featured heavily in the promotion of World Youth Day in Sydney, according to the WYD08 Communications Director, Jim Hanna.

“We made very good use of cyberspace – the online world is always ‘open for business’ globally, it’s multilingual and you can include every bit of information, as long as it’s easy to navigate,” he told delegates.

Jim said the WYD08 website had been designed “with an edgy, energetic font, stylised images and bright colours to give it a sense of youthfulness and vitality”. Its effectiveness had been measured in the 10 million hits a month it received in the lead-up to WYD08 in July.

He said another important web link was the monthly newsletter ePILGRIMAGE, which was sent to tens of thousands of registered pilgrims around the world.

Despite the distance to Australia and the unforeseen rise in airfares caused by fuel increases, effective online communication at WYD08 was instrumental in attracting a total of 113,000 international pilgrims and an overseas media contingent of 2,100.

In a world first, registered pilgrims received a daily SMS from the Pope during WYD Week. The WYD social networking site XT3.com also became very popular with the pilgrims. It now has about 30,000 users.

The 2008 ACPA Awards for Excellence were announced at the conference dinner on 2 October. The guest speaker was Sean Dorney, the ABC’s Pacific correspondent.

A total of 23 awards were presented including the Bishop Phillip Kennedy Memorial Prizes to Sydney’s *The Catholic Weekly* (Newspapers) and Parramatta’s *Catholic Outlook* (Magazines).

Other winners included Best News Story (*The Catholic Weekly*, Sydney); Best Feature (*The Southern Cross Monthly*, Adelaide); Best Column (*Madonna*); Best Editorial Feature (*Aurora*, Maitland-Newcastle); Best Website (*NZ Catholic*); and Best Regional Publication (*Kimberley Community Profile*, Broome).

At ACPA’s annual general meeting on 3 October, a proposal to research and publish a history of the association since it was established in 1956 was carried unanimously.