

Hope a key theme for OLMC Parramatta's Mercy Day 2017

28 September 2017



Bishop Vincent Long OPM Conv during Mercy Day celebrations. Image: Supplied.

On Friday September 15, Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta students and staff were joined by Bishop of Parramatta, Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, Deena Yako from the Refugee Council of Australia and the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta to celebrate Mercy Day in the College's 128th year.

The day began in the College's newest building, the Ailsa Mackinnon Community Centre, with a dialogue between Bishop Vincent, refugee advocate Mrs Deena Yako, and Pastoral Worker Sister Margaret Sheppard rsm who has worked at Detention Centres on Manus and Christmas Islands. All three speakers shared their stories with passion and hope. Deena gave a very moving account her experience of seeking protection in Australia after journeying from Iraq.

Bishop Vincent, also a refugee from Vietnam during the 1970s, passionately shared the many ways Australia has the capacity to be hospitable, quoting from our National Anthem: "We've boundless plains to share with those who seek protection." Sister Margaret Sheppard then addressed the audience, inviting students to become like 'shining lamps' of justice and compassion.

After the dialogue, Bishop Vincent and College Chaplain, Father Walter Fogarty, celebrated Mass and called on the community to live as agents of faith, hope and mercy. After the Mass, Congregation Leader of the Parramatta Sisters of Mercy, Sister Mary-Louise Petro, challenged the community to engage in 'contemplative action' and to ask ourselves: "In light of what I have heard today, what is one small action I can now do, where God's Spirit is inspiring me to live Mercy?"

Principal Stephen Walsh says Mercy Day is a celebration of our charisma and rich heritage: "At OLMC we continue to strive to make Mercy a verb and follow in the footsteps of Sisters of Mercy founder Catherine McAuley, who demonstrated her love of neighbour through service to others. Mercy is an expression of our love for those in our community who are marginalised: it is living out the Gospel values, which promote the dignity and worth of all human beings. On Mercy Day this year we were so blessed to hear these stories and to know that, despite current government policy, there are many Australians who are out there supporting our sisters and brothers in need – this indeed is Mercy in action."



OLMC students Mercy Day celebrations. Image: Supplied.

Director of Mission Claire Thomas says that Mercy Day is always a very special day for the OLMC community: "The students were very engaged with what they were hearing at the Forum and the Mass and all throughout the festivities that followed, the love for the spirit for Mercy Day was so clearly evident in both students and staff."

Established in 1889, OLMC Parramatta is a leading Independent Catholic girls' school which provides contemporary and innovative learning excellence in the rich Mercy tradition. Our heritage inspires our young Mercy women to expand beyond what they know they can be, to lead with courage and act justly to make a difference in an ever-changing world.

With thanks to OLMC.

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