



## 2016 MAGUIRE CELEBRATION - Principal's Address

Thank you girls. Tonight one of our commercial TV stations launched Australia's Got Talent! I'm sure you'd agree with me when I say tonight Sacred Heart College has showcased its talent! Congratulations to our award recipients.

Thank you to our school choir and orchestra and to our past pupils who continue to be part of our Sacred Heart College Mercy Story. Thank you to Tim McCallum for returning to Sacred Heart as a guest performer. It has been a privilege to have you here tonight. There are many more people who need to be thanked for this evening too many to mention here but I do acknowledge our overall coordinator Deputy Principal Gerard Raven, Margaret Wills the Producer of tonight's celebration and Julie Tucker our College Organizer. Not even violent storms, floods or a change of venue dampened their enthusiasm and energy nor that of the organizing team. Thank you to our College Captains Chaira, Meg and Corrin. I wish you well in your role as College Captains.

This year's theme -Opening the Doors of Mercy together has been chosen in response to Pope Francis' declaration that 2016 will be an extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. The Church, since its inception has challenged injustice and has called for compassion, empathy, forgiveness and reconciliation and this is what a call to mercy entails. Although the past two centuries have brought innovation, and incredible advances in Technology, medicine, and human dignity there is much that my generation and that of my parents have gotten terribly wrong.

If we focus on the worst of 20<sup>th</sup> Century we see two world wars with 50 to 70 million dead in the Second World War alone, as well as genocide and the mass murder of millions in concentration camps. Whilst my generation waited in eagerness for the new millennium it began ominously and sensationally in 2001 with September 11 and we continue to live with the threat of ruthless terrorism, outrageous injustices, abused and starving children, millions of people in flight, devastation and natural catastrophes in the form of earth quakes, volcanic eruptions, Tsunamis, floods and draughts. We should be horrified by outbreaks of violence among youth in which others are beaten senseless, kicked and tormented even to the point of death.

Our World continues to experience poverty. Too many people lack food, shelter are unemployed, or experience serious illness or disability and are unable to receive appropriate medical treatment and care. There are still large parts of the world where people are illiterate and have no chance or reduced access to education. Too many people experience poverty in the form of isolation, loneliness, communication difficulties and exclusion from social interaction through discrimination and marginalization. And there is evidence all around us, especially amongst our young people of mental or spiritual poverty, which presents as a lack of orientation, inner emptiness, hopelessness and destitution and despair.

We could say the world has taken a sharp turn for the worse or argue that our moral compass is broken. What we see in all these situations is an absence of *Mercy*. *If* as a Catholic School

in the Mercy tradition we are to honour and enact Pope Francis' call to mercy then we need to sharpen our Mercy focus so that we continues to be a place where mercy is freely given, where everyone can feel welcome, loved, forgiven and encouraged to do good. This means we all need to be protectors of one another and the environment and this requires us to show tenderness and compassion for each other and in particular those in need.

We don't need to go far to find a road map. The New Testament and our Christian tradition have fleshed out what mercy concretely means and it has distinguished in detail seven corporal works and seven spiritual works of Mercy. It is these works of Mercy that Catherine McAuley modeled in the **work** of the Sisters of Mercy. And so this year more than ever we are being called to:

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Instruct the ignorant
- Council the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Admonish the sinner
- Gladly forgive injury
- Bear wrongs patiently and
- Prayer for the living and the dead

This year as a school community our attention will go to exploring these spiritual and corporal works of mercy as they relate to us in this point in time. **I invite you all to join us.** We will take ACTION. Where action is not possible we will SPEAK out. And where neither ACTION nor WORD is possible we will PRAY. We will heed the call of Pope Francis for Mercy because we are a Catholic School in the Mercy tradition and because I believe that hope lies with **your** generation and that more encouraging times will come.

Students, staff, parents and families, Sisters of Mercy and invited guests *I now declare the 2016 School Year has begun.*

*Anna Negro*

February 9, 2016