

The Article that follows is a reflection from one of our School Leaders relaying the group experiences at the 2017 JJAMM Leadership Gathering.

JJAMM 2017

Over the course of 5 days, teenagers from all over Australia and New Zealand were transformed from simple strangers to the leaders of tomorrow's world.

Our first stop for JJAMM week was Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney. The resting place of Australia's first Saint. It was here that we explored the footsteps that St Joseph, Julian Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop had already set out before us. This allowed student leaders from Josephite schools all over to better discover the ideals of Josephite leadership embodied by Mary. We were asked to think about our hopes and dreams for our schools and to hold them close in our minds and hearts as we continued our journey together.

Then we travelled to Kincumber where we were surrounded not only by a beautiful landscape, but also by the Home for Boys that was established by Mary MacKillop herself. The spirit of Mary MacKillop and the children she educated on this site was alive and well. It was here at Kincumber where the barriers of being strangers was completely broken. We presented our school spirits and shared and created ideas to implement into our communities.

Every day a new idea was brought to life. We were taught about issues facing the world today such as climate change, refugee and asylum seekers, poverty and Aboriginal rights and freedoms. From learning about these issues we came together and explored the possibilities of raising awareness within our school communities. Coming up with ideas such as a refugee wall, tree planting competitions, an old clothes donation box and so much more. While investigating these issues we created our own art statement pieces. Using a cut-out of Mary MacKillop as the blank canvas and inspiration, we created 10 different artworks. By the end we had an "army of Mary's" that were standing against the issues that were most important to us.

During this experience we were also challenged to raise as much awareness within our school and local communities as possible. This included using social media to our advantages. We were given the hashtag #BringThemHere as a starting point on helping the refugee and asylum seeker issues facing Australia. We have been encouraged to share our projects with this hashtag on every social media platform we have to raise the greatest amount of awareness possible.

On the final days of our JJAMM adventure we came back to the hopes and dreams that were created at the start. We looked seriously on the hundreds of ideas that were gathered and translated to our school communities and the tools that we had at home. Compiling these into a list and working out an agenda, we were given a chance to practise pitching our ideas to our Principal. This gave us the confidence for when we faced the real thing.

During the busyness of the days we often came together as community to reflect on the journey so far. We did this by letting silence fall and joining together in prayer. On the last night we held a ritual to celebrate JJAMM. To mark our contributions to JJAMM 2017, each student planted a plant to symbolise the growing of ideas, friendships and most importantly the spirit of St Joseph, Julian Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop that is within us all.

The JJAMM experience wasn't all leadership talk and changing the world. During the day we made connections and each night we were able to showcase our talents in so many different ways. It brought together a group of people who started off as strangers and ended as close friends. Connections that otherwise would never have been made and won't be broken even if seas separate us.

Along with memories made and stories to cherish, a fire was ignited on those five glorious days. A fire that will spread throughout not only our school communities, but also through the lives of people we know now and people that we have yet to meet. This fire will continue to burn until the end of our lives and will influence our future decisions. This experience would not have been possible without the contributions of Karen Oxley, Sister Jan Barnett and of course our teachers. A special thanks to them.

Upon returning back to school, Mr Ndaira, Erin, Katarina and myself met to discuss how we can best implement our ideas into the school community, better enriching the great activities we are already doing here at the College.

Last but not least JJAMM can be summed up in this quote: "If we stand together, we can change the world." This was clearly evident during JJAMM and continues to be evident as the leaders of the schools communicate with each other over emails and social media. JJAMM was the start of us continuing the footsteps of St Joseph, Julian Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop to make this world a better place - one step at a time.

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An “army” of Mary’s ready to work for change



Student leaders pray around Mary's Tomb



Tree planting to represent growing ideas for change



2017 JJAMM Leaders at Kincumber