

MERCY AND COURAGE

Mercy Partners Formation was honoured to participate in the Foundation Day Mass at St Mary's College in Ipswich on 1 May. Principal Paula Goodwin delivered a powerful address, highlighting the remarkable contributions of Mother Vincent/ Ellen Whitty and the work of the Sisters of Mercy.

From the age of 19, Ellen Whitty's own formation as a Sister of Mercy was guided by Catherine McAuley. Ellen's exceptional abilities, intelligence, composure, and beloved nature led her to be elected as the Reverend Mother of Mercy House in Dublin at the young age of 29. Her previous roles as Bursar and leader of the novitiate also showcased her exceptional leadership skills.

The courage displayed by Catherine McAuley and Ellen Whitty was not impulsive, but rather a thoughtful response after careful consideration of all options. Before founding a school at Mercy House in Baggot Street, Catherine travelled to France to learn about their educational methods. Similarly, before establishing the first Mater hospital in Dublin, Ellen Whitty was instrumental in despatching a staff of sisters to nurse the wounded on the battle-field and whilst doing so they worked alongside Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War.

Despite facing opposition from male leaders who did not understand their motivations, these women persisted with compassion and bravery. Ellen Whitty's unwavering dedication and tireless efforts have left an indelible mark on the development of Catholic Education in Australia. Through her courageous leadership, she founded St Mary's College, All Hallows' School, and numerous primary schools in Queensland, providing countless young minds with a strong foundation for their future. Not only that, but she also played a crucial role in the advancement of healthcare through the establishment of the Mater Hospital, all while navigating a foreign and unfamiliar country.

The Sisters of Mercy, with their unwavering commitment to education, health, and service, serve as a shining example of courage in action and a dedication to excellence. They have utilised their God-given gifts and the teachings of Jesus to bring hope and liberation to those in need, and this gift is meant to be shared with others.

The pioneering spirit of the Sisters of Mercy continues to inspire us as we carry on the Mercy Charism. They envisioned a world of compassion and dignity, and we are challenged to courageously pass on this gift to our world. One act of courage can change a day, one day can change a life, and as exemplified by the lives of Catherine McAuley and Ellen Whitty, one life can change the world.

I encourage you to discover your own courage and utilise it to achieve your dreams and make a positive impact on the world as a person of mercy.

On 10 May we pay tribute to Ellen Whitty and her five companions, who bravely responded to Bishop Quinn's call and established the first Sisters of Mercy in Queensland back in 1861. Let us never forget the pioneering spirit and unwavering commitment of these extraordinary women whose courage and compassion continue to inspire us.

Let's keep Ellen Whitty in our minds as we contemplate these blessings:

She was a light-filled soul: may her words enkindle our spirits and inspire us to vision a better world

She was a risk taker: may her actions embolden us to overcome our fears and fight for justice

She was faith filled: may her deep trust in God gently lead us in our own spiritual path

She was courageous: may her example help us to embrace hope and confidence during times of sorrow and difficulty

She was a nurturer: may her care and compassion for others be a template for our own relationships with those with whom we live and work

She was a lover of life: may her enthusiasm, humour, joy and capacity for inspiring others help encourage us in our own life.

And may the love of God go with us this day and forever.

Amen.



REFLECTION:

How can you change the world as a person of mercy?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.