JJAMM Experience

“Find happiness in making others happy” St Mary MacKillop

by 2016 College Captains
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On 12 February, we had the incredible opportunity to fly to Mary MacKillop Place in Sydney, and for the first time in GYC history, participate in the JJAMM Experience.

JJAMM is a leadership camp run by the Sisters of St Joseph and held in North Sydney. Student leaders from around Australia come together, representing their Josephite schools and celebrating the charism of Mary MacKillop, Julian Tenison-Woods and St Joseph. Schools from across Australia and New Zealand, filled with passion for practical action, all aspire to follow in the footsteps of these incredible examples of servant leadership, and having the chance to meet these students made us realise that at GYC, we are part of a much bigger picture than we could imagine.

Arriving at the conference, we knew only each other and our Ministry teacher, Ms Sullivan, who accompanied us on the journey. This meant that we had the chance to get to know a whole new group of like-minded people.

During our first few days in Sydney, through visiting the place where Mary MacKillop lived and learning about the first school she established with Fr Tenison-Woods, we were able to develop an understanding of the mission of the Josephites, and the people they are.

We discovered that at the heart of the Josephite mission is a passion for practical action: living out faith through helping those in need.

On our second night in Sydney, we celebrated a Mass during which each school presented its own pledge reflecting on the values and qualities for which its leaders believed their community stood. Through listening to each school’s pledge, we came to realise that many of the statements were similar; understanding that there is a strong connection between our Catholic schools.

A lovely moment we experienced at Mary MacKillop Place was when the Sisters of St Joseph presented each of us with the symbolic gift of a wooden foot, which recognises the journey that we all have ahead as leaders in our schools while reminding us that we are never alone on this journey, and that we have the Josephite community and the passion of its founders supporting us with every step.

After spending time in Sydney, we caught a bus out to Kincumber, the area in which Mary MacKillop established a boys’ home, which has now become a special sanctuary for retreat and reflection. Kincumber is situated on a river; a tranquil place where we could really feel a greater presence surrounding us, and filling us with spirit, guiding us during our precious time there.
We spent a lot of time in Mary’s old schoolhouse, where we had several sessions, led by leaders from different schools. Each session was filled with different ideas and strategies on how the Josephite spirit of compassion and practical action could be incorporated into our schools.

We formed groups with students from different schools, each group focussing on specific issues, such as the plight of asylum seekers, multiculturalism, mental health, and many more. In these groups, we developed our own artworks speaking out about these issues. These works will be shown as a part of an exhibition which will be held to mark the 150th anniversary of the Josephite tradition.

On our final night at Kincumber, each state split prepared a separate element for a liturgy reflection. This prayer saw our entire group wandering through the beautiful grounds, whilst stopping at different stations at which each state presented their designated part of the liturgy. We Tasmanians’ involved everyone in walking to the jetty, located below the retreat centre on the riverbank, where we invited each participant to pick up a rock, and throw it into the river. This symbolised the weight of our own worries on stepping into the big year ahead and letting go of these anxieties; also revealing that as young people, we are not alone in experiencing feelings of fear.

Saying goodbye to the JJAMM experience and the wonderful people we met was very sad, but upon returning to school, we are so excited to share everything we have learnt with our community, having realised how great our school really is!

We hope that from this experience we are able to bring the Josephite values of compassion, practical action, and encouragement into our journey as leaders this year. We feel extremely blessed to have been given this opportunity, and cannot thank the College, particularly Mrs Court and Ms Sullivan, enough for giving us this chance to realise how lucky we are to be a part of this vibrant and wonderful community.