

The Opening Address by College Captain's Leon Kozoolin and Mikaela San Giorgio from St John's Regional College Dandenong Victoria.

Leon and Mikaela were asked to reflect on the College Theme "Blessed are the Merciful" and address the College Community and guests at the Opening College Eucharist for 2016 in place of a Homily.

LEON: (INTRO)

Pope Francis named this year the Year of Mercy; hence, this year, our College Theme is "Blessed are the Merciful"

This comes from the fifth beatitude, one of Jesus' teachings he left behind for us to follow.

MIKAELA:

At first glance the theme for this year seems pretty straight forward. Those who show mercy are those who are blessed, but it is not until I sat down quietly on my own, that I realised the incredible power of this year's theme. What differentiates it from the rest is that it incredibly personal and challenges you to reflect upon yourself.

LEON:

What does mercy mean to you?

For some, mercy is the "highest attribute of love"

Maybe for you, it's spending time with your buddies, or saying hello to someone who looks a little down.

To me, to be merciful is to have the ability to understand what others are going through, to see through their eyes and feel what they feel.

MIKAELA:

Perhaps, showing mercy is being able to live out your life with empathy and not just sympathy. In simple terms, it is having the ability to not just feel sorry for other people, but to genuinely connect and understand them. Showing mercy is not about showing pity, it is about channeling the love that is innate in all of us and dispensing it without expecting anything in return but another person's happiness.

LEON:

At times, the world we live in tends to be rather UN-merciful.

Around every corner there seems to be criticism of human mistakes, judgement, condemnation, hatred between different groups of people and continued oppression of minorities like refugees, indigenous people and LGBTIQ communities.

But sometimes, there are bright beacons of hope, the epitome of mercy in an ultimate act of understanding and love.

The lives of St John Baptist De La Salle and the Venerable Nano Nagle lead prime examples of such acts. They chose to step away from the comfort of their personal lives and provide the opportunity of education to the most disadvantaged people in society.

MIKAELA:

2016 is the year to get personal. The challenge presented to you today is to live out your entire life with a selfless kind of love. You could do this through your fundraising efforts for Mission Action Day or simply providing an ear that will listen.

LEON:

Use all the power in your being to make others truly happy. Try to understand the situations of others rather than turning to judgement.

MIKAELA:

Make it your mission to create smiles on the faces of each person you meet and let that motivate you through your darkest and lightest times.

LEON:

As humans, we depend on each other. Through this school year, go out of your way to impact the lives of other people. Be a beacon of mercy. Show love, respect and understanding towards your fellow human beings, as leaders, we'll be committed to doing the same.