From The Chaplain 08/03/22

Happy International Women's Day… and week!

A little shout out to all of the incredible women in our life. At VPS we are so lucky to have so many wonderful women in our community. For me personally, I have been very blessed with some beautiful, kind, gentle and strong women in my life, who have been inspirational role models for me. My Nana worked tirelessly in her community, taking in strangers and supporting many charities. My mum went back to University in her 40's to be a specialist in her field, my sister is the most kind and caring mother to her babies, and my sister in law is head of Science at Scotch College. Each one has had a positive impact on my life, and on the lives of my own girls. However, I know that my story is not everyone's story. And whilst we are considerably lucky here in Australia, there are many Australian women, and many women in other countries who are not treated with the same dignity and respect that we might be. This is day is for celebrating how far we have come, but also to remember that we still have a way to go.

International Women's Day (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

This day has occurred for well over a century, with the first gathering in 1911 supported by over a million people.

International Women's Day, also known as IWD for short, grew out of the labour movement to become an annual event recognised by the United Nations.
The seeds were planted in 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York demanding shorter working hours, better pay and the right to vote. A year later, the Socialist Party of America declared the first National Woman's Day.

It was Clara Zetkin, a communist activist and advocate for women's rights, who suggested the creation of an international day. She put her idea to an International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen in 1910 - and the 100 women there, from 17 countries, agreed to it unanimously. Women's persecution and inequality prompted them to become more vocal and involved in the movement for reform in 1908. Around the same time, 15,000 women marched through New York City, demanding shorter work hours, higher pay and the right to vote.

International Women's Day has become a date to celebrate how far women have come in society, politics and in economics. Purple, green and white are the colours of IWD, according to the International Women's Day website. "Purple signifies justice and dignity. Green symbolises hope. White represents purity."

In the past few years though, there has been progress - especially in female leadership.
- Kamala Harris became the first female, first black and first Asian-American US vice-president in 2021.
- In the same year, Tanzania swore in its first female president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, while Estonia, Sweden, Samoa and Tunisia got female prime ministers for the first time in history. In January 2022, Xiomara Castro was sworn in as Honduras' first female president.
- In 2021, New Zealand approved paid bereavement leave for women (and their partners) who have a miscarriage or stillbirth.
- While in 2020, Sudan criminalised female genital mutilation.

- And don't forget the impact of the #MeToo conversation, speaking out against experiences of harassment and sexual assault? It began back in 2017 but is now a global phenomenon.

So let's all champion each other on. Let's straighten each other's crowns. Tell the women in your life how incredible they are, and let's teach our young girls that we will continue to strive to be better.

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