

ST URSULA'S COLLEGE KINGSGROVE

60 YEARS – DIAMOND JUBILEE

I am very happy to be here today representing the Ursuline sisters who founded St. Ursula's college 60 years ago and who have been involved in its story to this day.

The story of St Ursula's is a rich story.

Like many stories it can be divided into chapters; some are inspirational, some more ordinary, some are easy, some are more challenging. We are here today to celebrate the whole of this story and we can look back in gratitude and forward with hope.

60 years is a diamond jubilee.

If we think of diamonds we know that they are beautiful, they are formed over long periods of time and they are able to disperse light of different colours.

When individuals celebrate a diamond jubilee, such as a wedding or profession jubilee it is significant because it represents such a long period in that person's life. 60 years is a relatively short time in the history of an organisation. However, if we think of diamonds – and that's what we are reminded of today - this jubilee celebrates a much longer history than 60 years.

Saint Ursula's college's story goes back much further than 60 years.

Before this college at Kingsgrove there were other Ursuline colleges in Ashbury, Toowoomba, Brisbane and Armidale.

Before those colleges, there were the first Ursulines who came to Australia as refugees on a boat, having been expelled from Germany during the *Kulturkampf* of Bismarck.

And before these sisters who came to Australia, there were others in France and

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Before them, there was Saint Angela in Brescia in northern Italy.

In 1535 St. Angela founded a company of women, not specifically for education or to build schools, but to be women of the gospel living in a special way in their own society.

And so the story of the development of this diamond which is St. Ursula's college goes back even further to Jesus of Nazareth, whom Angela followed in a special way.

The charism of Angela was a particular light on the gospel of Jesus and it is in the gospel that we have our most important foundations for our community - the values of love, acceptance, service, action, empowerment, unity and respect.

I note that each year level in the college has a focus on one of these values.

I hope though that students do not think of each in isolation.

If St. Angela was about anything she was about respect for each person with the gifts that each brings to the community. She was about moving out in service of the gospel – Angela was a woman of action – and you have that invitation in your school motto *Serviam*.

Unity is important yes, but so is listening to the different voice in our community which might be prophetic, calling us to do something new or differently in this time.

Acceptance too is important but so is the challenge to be the best self we can become – not to be better than others but to be the best that we ourselves can become.

Your theme for this year is 'Growing Our Story' –

I have been privileged to be part of the growth of that story as a student, as a staff member and as a community member with so many Ursulines who have served this educational community over 60 years.

Growing the story is about looking to the future with hope;

It is about responding to the invitation of the future;

It is about sustainability in our community, our church, our country our planet and our universe.

The achievement of excellent academic results is not something new for St. Ursula's – since its inception there have been high achievers in the academic sphere. Such high achievement means little unless it is matched by the growth of good community people, women of the gospel who live life to the full and who are inclusive of those who find this difficult. This is important in growing our story.

In any story, while it's important to remember the chapters which have preceded us –

We cannot stay there. New chapters are waiting to be written and they will be different.

Responding to the future requires imagination, it requires commitment and it requires courage. It also needs to be a very enjoyable journey along the way.

As we move into these new chapters of St. Ursula's college, as we grow our story, I invite you to the openness and expectation which characterised our first Australian Ursuline sisters, those refugees who came on a boat, as they sailed into Sydney harbour in 1882:

There outstretched before our expectant eyes lay the land of the great unknown, the land of promise. We felt instinctively that our

*feet were about to tread strange new paths; that a future lay
before us more wondrous than we ever dreamed of ... (Annals –
Australian Ursulines)*

May your future be one of welcome and inclusion – able to reflect the diversity
of which a diamond is capable.

May your future be wondrous and may you always be open to the movement of
the holy spirit in the unfolding story of St. Ursula's college.

Thank you.

***Sr Ruth Durick OSU
Provincial
Australian Ursulines.***