



## Rise

### Proclaim Lismore, LEAD Conference 2021

On the 11th March, Proclaim Lismore gathered over two hundred senior students at McAuley Catholic College in Grafton for the first diocesan-wide student discipleship event since the COVID-19 outbreak. With double the number of participants from the last event in 2019, it seems that young people are eager to connect face-to-face after a year of isolation. The atmosphere in the room was next level! Full of enthusiasm, laughter, music, inspiring keynote speakers, bold testimonies and encouraging insights from peers in small group discussions, the theme 'rise' materialised through the life-giving community that gathered.

Pope Francis said it perfectly in the first chapter of *Christus Vivit: the post-synodal apostolic exhortation to young people and to the entire people of God*, "Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better. That is why I constantly urge young people not to let themselves be robbed of hope; to each of them I repeat: "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Tim 4:12)." The invitation given to young people from God throughout scripture and history is still true today, "will you come on an adventure with me?"

The LEAD Conference keeps Christ at the centre and explores the mission of the Church. The Conference is designed to inspire senior students to return to their respective schools as teams commissioned to be missionary disciples with the three primary outcomes of being connected, committed and courageous. Inspiration for the

committed and courageous. Inspiration for the program came from the lives of the saints. The Conference began with a powerful narration of the stories of four young saints: Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, Saint Joan of Arc, Saint Jose Sanchez del Rio and Saint Therese of Lisieux. As Bishop Emeritus, Geoffery Jarret DD, always says, "the Catholic Church is a storehouse." Drawing on the miracles, the radical lives of the saints, the depth of wisdom in scripture and the nurturing grace of the sacraments, the program engaged the innate desire for Summum Bonum - supreme good. All the while, celebrating youth with games, interactive activities, lively stories from keynote speakers: Zac Parnell from Net Ministries Australia, Tash Mierendorf from the Archdiocese of Brisbane and Danny Shaw, College Minister of St Joseph's College, Banora Point, and contemporary praise music led by the Proclaim Lismore worship team, *Wildfire*.



*Saint Mary's College, Casino, representatives.*

Well, what now? LEAD ran for approximately twenty-four hours, Thursday 3pm - Friday 1.30pm, with a delightful sleep on the floor in classrooms to break up the fast-paced program. But, how do we channel this momentum as a church? In the post-event evaluation 88% were either likely or highly likely to make a weekly or fortnightly commitment to a Senior Ministry Team, with an even desire to contribute to leading ministry events, building community, leadership development, works of charity and advocating for the needs of students. Approximately 50% of respondents admitted the pressures of study, HSC and academics might prevent them from being a member of a Senior Ministry Team, 40% are already committed members and 8% acknowledged the social stigma of being associated with faith would prevent them.

In the midst of their lives, young people need to know they have a place in the Church. In fact, as St Paul teaches, "But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts,

but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:18-19). No matter how chaotic they might seem to be, young people are a gift to be received. The Church, in return, gifts the young person community, wisdom, purpose and above all, love. As Jack Bailey, from McAuley College articulated in a post-LEAD interview, "I learnt to be more confident in myself. I am enough."

Proclaim Lismore will continue to sow seeds and establish opportunities for encounter with Jesus through the Student Discipleship Continuum. But, as life-long learners, the Diocesan community - school and parish, are asking the question, how do we better water the seed, expose the seeds to sunlight, and bear fruit from the garden? Bearing fruit calls for a rise in commitment from every member of the 'body'.

- For snippets of keynote speakers and student interviews check out the [Proclaim Lismore Students Youtube Channel](#)
- For photos of the event check out the [Proclaim Lismore Students Facebook page](#)



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