

I think it is fair to say that a few of our group were a little bit nervous as we sat in a boat waiting to land on Bathurst Island a few weeks ago. Although I had been there before I too was nervous. I live in a household of boys and was about to spend five days with 18 young women. So firstly I would like to thank this amazing group of people who helped to make our Immersion trip truly memorable. You were all warm and welcoming and I will always treasure memories of badly sung 1980s songs in the back of a very dusty and hot vehicle.

While our group was away the Australian Church celebrated Social Justice Sunday. Each year the Catholic Bishops of Australia release a social justice statement on the last Sunday in September. This year's statement titled "And You Shall Be My Witnesses" centred on the theme of Youth. Now I don't know if you've seen a picture of the Australian Bishops lately – but they're not young. In the Toowoomba Diocese I work with Bishop Morris and a Social Justice Commission made up of ten members. Now as members we have school principals, university lecturers and public servants – but again we're not young. So for a little while I have been scratching my head working out the best way to launch a statement for and about young people written and promoted by old people.

And I think I have found the perfect place – here this morning recognising and celebrating the St Ursula's Tiwi Islands Immersion Trip for 2009. The statement "And You Shall be My Witnesses" highlights the fact that around the world one of the sections of the community that suffers the most from injustice is the young. It also emphasises that youth are some of the strongest and most passionate workers for justice. So this morning as a way of launching this Social Justice Statement I would like to take a few moments to acknowledge and affirm the students who journeyed to the Tiwi Islands this September.

You took risks. The immersion trip was something that we don't always do. In 5 days we visited three remote Aboriginal communities. It was sometimes uncomfortable and challenging. I honour and affirm the way that you were all open to a different experience.

You witnessed and spoke the Truth. As you took part in the Immersion you were sometimes challenged by what you saw. When you saw injustice you did not turn away or ignore it. I honour and affirm your honesty and integrity.

You endured physical challenges. Some of you would be aware of people who have recently died on the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. While our physical exercise was nothing like the Kokoda walk – the heat and humidity we experienced was exactly the same. I honour and affirm the way you met the physical challenges with courage and good humour.

You Reflected. One of the key parts of the Christian journey and the social justice process is to take time to deeply reflect on the world around us. You took time each day to make sense of your new experiences. I honour and affirm your reflections and how you were open to sharing them.

You observed and engaged. I lived and worked on the Tiwi Islands for twelve months. Some of the things that it took me a year to see and understand you picked

up in days. I honour and affirm the way that you built relationships and noticed the positive and negative things happening around you.

You were Ambassadors of Hope. This Year's Social Justice Statement recognises the positive energy that youth bring to the challenges that face some of the most marginalized in the world. I honour and affirm the way that you worked together and showed how things can be different.

Whenever your community performs a musical, sends away a sporting team, enters a debating competition etc. you reflect the good name of St Ursula's College. I would like to let all of you know that wherever we went in the Northern Territory a few weeks ago the values and energy of this place was proudly displayed. People saw young women of substance open to the new and willing to be a part of a positive change.

In this year's social justice statement a challenge from Pope Benedict during World Youth Day is reissued. *What will you leave to the next generation? ... What legacy will you leave to young people yet to come? What difference will you make?* This morning I would like to reissue this challenge to us all. What will we leave to the next generation? What legacy will we leave to young people yet to come? What difference will we make?

This morning on behalf of our Commission I am leaving a number of Social Justice Statements with prayer cards and Ten Step Leaflets which give some examples of ways in which we can make a difference. I commend these resources to you – but more importantly I commend the sixteen social justice statements who journeyed with me to the Tiwi Islands to all of you. Listen to all of them – they have something to say. So once again thank you to St Ursula's College for this opportunity to share with you and be a part of a great experience. To Mrs Clarke, Miss Lancaster, Louise, Emma, Michaela, Siobhan, Molly, Abby, AJ, Jade, Moira, Gabrielle, Lauren, Brianna, Gillian, Gemma, Tiarna and Julia thank you for teaching and changing me.

