

Update from Rumbek

Senior 4 Students Graduate

Among the many experiences while in Rumbek I had the privilege of attending the Mass of Thanksgiving and the Graduation of twenty two Senior Four students which took place on Saturday 15th November with an all-day celebration! It was amazing to hear the girls reflect ‘from the heart’ on the impact of Mary Ward and her followers on their lives while in Loreto Secondary School. This was echoed in a passionate homily delivered by Fr. Andrea from the Diocese whom I first met at the Official Opening of the school in April 2008.

A line of *Congregation*, a poem written by Bakhita in Senior 4 and presented by the group at Graduation, is an example of the many tributes to Loreto and Mary Ward which punctuated the day. It describes IBVM as:

A congregation that was formed long before you were born

by a woman, a woman whose dream it was to empower women,

A woman who wanted to build up young women and strengthen them,

A woman who wanted her fellow women to do great things in the present and in the days to come...



The following is an extract from Orla’s address as Principal, prior to presenting Rebecca Alek Marial, pictured above, with the Mary Ward award given to the student who was considered to have embodied the qualities of Mary Ward:

Today we honour someone special who has remained sincere in her own journey, struggling for her own freedom and justice with God and her community and in all of it has tried to be an example to others in truth and joy.

She is a student who is not graduating today but a member of the class – the student who had a different journey over the past few months, beginning in July when she was taken from the school and forced into marriage.

Despite her challenges she fought with the support of her maternal uncles and mother to follow her truth in justice and sincerity...after a period of imprisonment, accusations and trials she was released from the marriage. Unfortunately, this student did not feel that she could continue her studies this year but we honour her today...

You would have heard a pin drop as Rebecca's uncle thanked Orla and all those who had supported Rebecca on this difficult journey. As parents and students, a representative of the Ministry of Education, the politicians and various representatives of the Diocese and local community listened attentively, he urged everybody to support the rights of young women who wish to pursue their own dream...

Hope the photographs of Graduation have captured something of the atmosphere on the day!
I certainly feel the better for having been there...!

Marie Céline