

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE ASSEMBLY: FRIDAY 4TH AUGUST 2017

Next Wednesday is a public holiday to celebrate National Women's Day. On August 9th 1956, 20 000 women from all walks of life marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria. They were opposing the law which forced the black population to carry a pass, or a 'dompass' as it was known. "You strike the woman, you strike the rock" was chanted during the protest and gave strength to South African woman who suffered during the apartheid era.

61 years later not much has changed, sexism, racism and homophobia remain major scourges in our country. To make matters worse rape statistics in South Africa are very unreliable:

What we do know is that South Africa has the highest number of reported rapes per head of population of any Interpol member country, between 40 and 60 thousand rapes are reported every year. It is estimated that only 10% of rapes are reported and only 12 % of reported cases ever end up in conviction. 1/3rd of men in this country admitting to committing rape. Rape victims include baby girls. We read about these atrocities every day in our newspapers. (Story in today's Argus).

Are we shocked? The country seems to be numb to the terrible abuse of our women and children. I am not even talking about women who are victims of domestic violence and abuse.

As a school whose aim is to educate young boys to become good men it is important that we stand together to express our abhorrence to the continued abuse and degradation which women in our country continue to suffer. I want us to also think of the woman in our own lives, our grandmothers, mothers, sisters and girlfriends and how we treat them. The objectification of women as sex objects by young men is a major problem and has reared its head here at our school. It is not acceptable to joke about rape which seems to be a trend amongst young men, especially on social media.

Today I want us to think particular of the female members of the Bishops community who work here either as teachers or in our admin and support departments. How do we treat them? Is this school a safe place for all our women employees and do we treat them with dignity and respect.

So, on Wednesday as we enjoy a public holiday, let each of us think of these things and make Bishops and our country a better and safer place for all our women.