

**MEDIA RELEASE: A life given in love: Aboriginal Catholic Ministry empowers student leaders to be a voice for Mission**

To commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sr Irene McCormack's death, Catholic Mission Perth Office invited student leaders from various Catholic schools and colleges to share their reflections on her incredible story and legacy, at St Joseph's Convent Chapel in South Perth, WA.

Sr Irene dedicated 25 years of her life to Catholic education, before answering the call to overseas missionary service living and working amongst the poor in Peru.

"The students were empowered to respond to the witness of Sr Irene, reflecting on how their faith has been deepened, enriched, and challenged, on the offering of her life as a gift of love," says Catholic Mission Diocesan Director Francis Leong.

In a significant, sacred moment, Ms Donella Brown, director of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Perth, presented a message stick as a symbol for students to be a voice for Mission in the context of a life lived for love of God and love for the poor.

Overseeing this sacred moment was Sr Veronica Willaway OSB. Sr Veronica is an Aboriginal Sister from the Yuat Noongar people who joined the Benedictine Missionary Sisters of New Norcia in 1958.

"Sr Veronica has been working with Native American peoples of Nebraska until recently" says Ms Brown.

"We are blessed to have her back amongst us and amongst her people."

This Life for Love prayer video will be released to all Catholic schools on May 21 to commemorate and honour the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sr Irene McCormack death.

Catholic Mission, in partnership with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Irene McCormack Catholic College, Santa Maria College, Holy Cross College, St Columba's Catholic Primary School and Catholic Religious Australia have supported the production of this prayer video, and look forward to its inaugural national release and distribution on May 21.

Catholic Mission publishes in *Agenzia Fides*, the news agency of the Vatican, a list of all overseas missionaries who had lost their lives during missionary service *ad gentes* for that year, says Catholic Mission Diocesan Director Francis Leong.

"Catholic Mission has been seeking an appropriate occasion to draw attention to the many heart-rendering stories on this list," he says.

Should you like more information about this initiative, please contact Francis Leong at [director.cm@perthcatholic.org.au](mailto:director.cm@perthcatholic.org.au).

ENDS

**A link to the Life for Love prayer video:**

<https://youtu.be/EbJDHZkNops>

**Captions:**

**Sr Veronica Willaway OSB and Donella Brown from Aboriginal Catholic Ministry hand over the message stick in a sacred ritual empowering student leaders to be a voice for Mission as they reflect on the life of Sr Irene McCormack for Catholic Mission's Life for Love prayer video**

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**About Catholic Mission**

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church's global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ's mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Founded in Sydney in 1847, Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and take action for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.