What does it mean to be a father?
It doesn't take much effort to father a child but it takes a lifetime to be a father to that child. It is sometimes a bumpy road with lots of potholes but it is a long journey with destinations and stops along the way but a journey that keeps going for a lifetime.

When I was young I had different heroes be they sporting, music or entertainment. As many of us here would know, these are usually fleeting and are based on fashion or results. For usually we imagine that the hero is born out of the heat of a dangerous moment or situation whether that be winning X-Factor or the grand final. But there is another kind of hero, the person of quiet decency whose achievement is built over an entire career. We are often captured by the powerful descent of the waterfall while we ignore the steady progress of the river before and after the waterfall.

While heroes came and went throughout my youth there were two men that I always admired. One was my grandfather because I don’t think that we truly appreciate all our own parents do until we become parents ourselves. The other was St Joseph, whose qualities I also thought my grandfather portrayed.

In his homily at his inaugural Mass March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, Pope Francis said that in the Gospels, "St. Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak, but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for
genuine openness to others, for love."

These are certainly the qualities that we, as fathers, strive for and often dictate what we want for our children. It wasn’t so long ago that the main thing a father wanted for his daughter was to find a suitable husband and raise a family. While we still want that, we want so much more for you and that is why we are here today for one of the best things that we can do for our daughters is to help them become Mercy girls.

I feel that I am qualified to speak on this being the son of a Mercy girl who went to school here in the 1950’s, the husband of a Mercy girl who went here in the 70’s and 80’s and now the proud father of 2 mercy girls. For here at OLMC the teaching and living of Mercy values of Mercy, Compassion, Justice, Dignity, Excellence, Hospitality, Stewardship and Service are evident in the staff and students that make up the school.

It is the last of these Mercy values that I would like to focus on for a moment – Service. Service is the exercising and ministry of leadership in order to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities. This is what we, as fathers, now dream for you – to become wonderful leaders of our communities based on Mercy values. Just over 2 years ago if you lived in the Federal seat of Greenway where your wonderful local member is Mercy Woman Michelle Rowland, we also had Julia Gillard as Prime Minister, Quentin Bryce as our Governor General, Kristina Keneally as NSW Premier and Marie Bashir as our state Governor. Unfortunately for Mrs Gillard and Mrs Keneally they were trying to make up for the
mistakes of the men that came before them but there is no limit to what you can achieve through a life of Service. we wish for you to be that hero, the person of quiet decency whose achievement is built over an entire career.

OLMC is like its patron Mary, Mother of Mercy caring and modelling love of our merciful God and we Fathers, with our wives, are like Blessed Joseph, spouse to the school. It is with the strongest love and faith in you that we place Sub Tuum Praesidium (under your protection) our daughters.

I would like to finish by paying tribute to my former teacher, Mrs Guerin, in the last term of her school life. On behalf of all fathers I thank you for the love, care and kindness you have shown our daughters.

By Stephen Bawden