

A Love Unbound and Free

By Beth Griffiths

I genuinely believe that as a generation of students we are going to change the world; we're so powerful in our beliefs, in our communities, individually and as a whole. But I think it's still to be determined whether that change will be for the better or for the worse. I'm not Catholic, I was raised in a protestant church that I still go to when I'm home by a community that I love and that aims to be the hands and feet of Jesus. As I've been at Newman, learning for the first time about saints and Catholic traditions, I've discovered and began to admire some of the figures that Catholic people learn about and take as namesakes, and I feel that St Maria de Mattias is one of the best examples of the kind of person who devoted their entire selves to being the hands and feet of Jesus. I've learnt that she was canonized the same year that I was born, 2003, and that Pope John Paul II saw in her a great commitment to serving other people so that they would see the love of Jesus in joyful action.

Personally, I feel that St Maria de Mattias would have a lot to say to us students about the love of Jesus Christ that brings a type of confidence that created a preacher, comforted the sad and told the truth of salvation. I think she would advise us to look around and see what people need. People need a lot of things but the most important things- money, food, family, a shoulder to cry on, forgiveness, a second chance- can be defined by love. A love that has no boundary or stipulations, a love that can only truly be exemplified by Jesus' sacrifice. I think she would ask us to think about the ways we can love people better: being generous with our things, talking to the people that are left out, making an effort to forgive that one person, telling others about this unconditional love of God that they need. St Maria knew what it was to be the hands and feet of Jesus, she was young when she started, and she didn't let anything hold her back from bringing the good news to others because she knew how important it was. And I think that boldness in love is what she would emphasize to us now because we still need it just as badly. For me, it can be summed up by the verse in 1 John chapter 4, verse 16 where it says "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." (NIV).

To live in love, to be practically loving and serve others is to live in God, and that is what I think St Maria believed was the most vital thing for all people, Catholic or not. She would invite us as students should live in love together, being practical in our service and bold in our faith because we have a God who gives us unbounded and free love. And if we do that, I fully believe we are going to be changing the world for the better in every way.