



Good morning Sr Mary, special guests, staff and students.

I have been asked to come up here today and explain where I'm going and what I'm doing for the next 6 months.

I have joined a volunteer teaching program in India to help young women with their English. Now these women are a little older than you, and have not found a husband. In the parts of India I am visiting, I am told that this excludes them from society. That not having a husband severely limits your ability to have a job, earn money and a place to live. Unlike me here in Australia, where I have a job, a solid income and a house of my own- all without a husband.

I have been a loud and proud feminist ever since I can remember. I've marched at protests and signed petitioned and argued with people on the internet. For so long that is all I was doing. And I don't mean to minimize protests and petitions, because we know they serve a significant purpose. But what I mean to say is I was talking the talk.

*And I got to a point last year where I realized I have to **walk the walk**.*

When I learnt about the limits these women were facing, my heart broke for them. As much as I can be loud and angry about this fact, and I can be very loud and very angry,- I thought, what can I actually do??

I can go over and help them.

They want to learn English. I am an English teacher. They have a need, I have the skill. Now I'd like you to think: What skill do you have that can help someone in your life? We have the Fitzroy homework club, where you could help a local primary school student with their work. We also have St Mary's House of Welcome, where you can volunteer your time. And there are so many other examples in your local community: babysitting, helping someone with their groceries or walking their dog because they can't. Helping the community does not need to be grand gestures. In fact small consistent efforts are worth more any grand gesture, because they build upon each other. That is mercy in action.

The high tide lifts all boats. We are all individual boats, but we are all sailing on the same sea. It's time to lift each other up, in whatever capacity we can.

*I am excited about flying out next week, but I am also really scared. Stepping out of your comfort zone and helping someone in your neighbourhood might be a little frightening too, but if there is one thing I know, it's that **fear subsides when we take action**.*

*I'll be back in October, with stories to share. And **I hope many of you are able to find me in the yard and tell me how you too walked the walk and acted with justice and mercy.***



Ms Fiona Tassone