

Thursday 21 September 2017

## Religious leaders gather at Notre Dame on ‘day for all’

**Leaders from the three main Abrahamic faiths – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – gathered at The University of Notre Dame Australia’s Fremantle Campus on September 14 to take part in the annual Abraham Day celebrations.**

In what has become a flagship event for the University and the Fremantle community, Notre Dame welcomed Catholic Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Chief Rabbi Dovid Freilich OAM and Sheikh Muhammad Agherdien to reflect on the theme *‘Abraham: Welcoming and Standing up for the Other’*.

Drawing on the wisdom and teaching of their respective cultures, each speaker reflected on Abraham, the father of the three religions and a model of openness, hospitality and generosity.

“I want to suggest that our three religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – have a vital role to play and precious resources to bear in helping our society to become worthy of the gift of human life we’ve all received from our Creator – from whom we’ve all come and to whom we will all return,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

Describing Abraham as “the quintessential example of hospitality”, Rabbi Freilich said even those who are not Abraham’s people or are malevolent should be deserving of equal care.

“Through God and Abraham we are shown to be role models and value the lives of every human being. And I’m proud to say that we see this in the spiritual grandchildren of Abraham,” he said.

“Each of us has it within him or her to carry the spiritual DNA of Abraham. We don’t have to be a Rabbi, an Archbishop or an Imam – what the Bible portrays here was that Abraham was just an ordinary human being and showed each of us how to welcome and stand up for the other.”

Sheik Agherdien said one of Abraham’s major roles in Islam was to be a “father of the faithful” and, in turn, developing a holy, righteous and peaceful community.

“Abraham symbolises what a nation should be like, how they should live, how they should conduct themselves, and how they should function in a good, well-established model society,” he said.

The event coincided with a three-week travelling exhibition the University hosted entitled ‘Courage to Care’, an initiative of the Holocaust Institute of Western Australia, which encourages secondary school students to stand up for others in the face of injustice and persecution.

Professor Celia Hammond, Notre Dame Vice Chancellor, said that by establishing an annual Abraham-centred day, the University hopes to be able to contribute, in some small way, to the fostering of solidarity and friendship between the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities of Western Australia.

“In an increasingly secular culture, we genuinely believe there is a need today for members of religious traditions – particularly those with a common origin in Abraham – to recognise what we have in common, to celebrate our shared beliefs and to do so in a spirit of openness, fraternity and hospitality,” Professor Hammond said.



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# Media Release



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**Caption:** Mohamed Alhassany, Sheikh Muhammad Agherdien, Chief Rabbi Dovid Freilich, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, Professor Celia Hammond, Aharon Friedland and Jodilee Tangarorang.



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