

# St Mary of the Cross MacKillop - Feast Day 8 August

## Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As we reflect the feast of Australia's first saint, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, we now remember one of the most influential figures in Catholic Education in Australia. A woman who allowed a spirited tomorrow to exist in communities that were on the margins and we unite ourselves with her, as we continue to walk together on the journey of reconciliation and understanding. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of First Nations Peoples to the lands, seas and waterways across the Diocese of Cairns and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation. We pray and give thanks for these ancient peoples who have enriched and sustained our continent over all that time. We praise God for our First Nation brothers and sisters and invite all Australians to work to ensure the generations to come can experience a deeper relationship with our country and hope for a sustainable future.

## Context of Feast of Mary MacKillop

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, feast day is celebrated each year on 8<sup>th</sup> August. She was recognised as Australia's first saint by Pope Benedict XVI in October 2010. Mary founded the Sisters of St. Joseph and of the Sacred Heart. Responding to the isolation of colonial families, she pioneered a new form of religious life to provide education for the children of families on the margins of society, in particular those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Mary's understanding of the hardship faced by Aboriginal people was influenced by her brother, Fr Donald MacKillop SJ (1853-1924) and her cousin, Fr Duncan McNab (1820-1896). Both Catholic priests were strong advocates for the rights of Aboriginal people including seeking land rights near MacKay when Fr McNab was given permission to start a Mission to the Aboriginal people. He's starting point was Aboriginal people were not to be treated as 'the problem'. Mary too adopted this position, and it is deeply rooted in the teaching of Jesus, helping those who others would not. It nearly came to be that Mary and her sisters went to Daly River in the NT to teach and assist but circumstances meant this did not eventuate. However, "the following century, the Josephite Sisters would realise, in a variety of ways, Mary's desire to serve the Indigenous people of this continent." (Hull p. 27)



Figure 1 Mary MacKillop  
<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/st-mary-mackillop-and-the-grace-of-forgiveness/>

## Scripture – Gospel reading from the Mass for Mary MacKillop

[Matthew 6:25-34]

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

"So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

## Reflection by Kathy Fleming

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The *Australian Catholics Magazine* has a focus on the feast of Mary MacKillop and showcases her as a brave and determined Australian woman. Named as our first saint, her story says something about the vision we need as Australians and Catholics. In this feature, Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ walks the reader through the life of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop and looks at how the works she began are continued by the Josephites and their associates today. Her interests, in courageously responding to the conditions and circumstances of those on the margins. Mary MacKillop, the zealous and compassionate young Sister of St Joseph and the community that she led, the new Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, would educate and care for the needs of our migrant and First Nation in South Australia and other colonies of Australia and in this 200<sup>th</sup> year of Catholic Education we remember her as a pioneer in education in this nation. For parent access to the wide range of resources that can be found on the Australian Catholics Education Hub please use the following link: [parents@cns.actholic.edu.au/acparents](mailto:parents@cns.actholic.edu.au/acparents)



Figure 2 Mary MacKillop  
Renato Antonio from Pixabay

## Prayer

### From the writings of Mary of the Cross MacKillop

Pray that a great unity may prevail,  
that charity may shine and a holy unworldly wisdom  
influence every word and act.

Whoever we are or wherever we may be let self be forgotten  
and let God's glory, his will and the general good alone  
absorb our thoughts, deliberations and actions. (1898)

## Call to Action

- Reflect with the family on one of St Mary of the Cross' quotes:
  - o *Never see a need without doing something about it*
  - o *Find happiness in making others happy*
  - o *Be not hasty in judging one another*
- Questions you are invited to discuss with your family looking forward, may be:
  - o How can we be inspired by the example of St Mary of the Cross McKillop?
  - o How can we more positively support our First Nations brothers and sisters to be proud of their culture and links to Country?
  - o How can we respond with greater understanding and openness to Reconciliation with our First Nation peoples?
- You may like to explore the Sisters of St Joseph Prayer resources [here](#) and [here](#).
- Finally, you might like to explore the creative Sr Jane Maisey who shares how she comes to know Jesus, Joseph and St Mary of the Cross through [prayer, drawing](#) and writing (this [e-book on Mary MacKillop is free!](#)). A particularly powerful prayer is this one called [Wise Women](#).



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