

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop - Feast Day 8 August 2022

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

In April this year, Elders gathered on the sands at Yarrabah and re-affirmed the desires of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. Cairns Catholic Education Services wholeheartedly supports these documents and their call for an establishment of a First Nations' Voice to be enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata Commission to lead to truth telling and treaty making that is integral to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation. From all points of the southern sky under which we live, work and love, the stars are aligning. As we reflect the feast of Australia's first saint, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, we acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of First Nations Peoples to the lands, seas and waterways across the Diocese of Cairns. We honour the Elders past; we offer prayers of hope to the Elders present; and add we commit to being a people of action to ensure that the stars *do* align, and that Constitutional Recognition and Makarrata do occur so as to honour the wisdom and ways of First Nations peoples of Australia.

Context of Feast of Mary MacKillop

Mary Helen MacKillop was born to Scottish immigrants; as the eldest of 8 children she learnt how to teach and care for those not as strong as her. Her faith sustained her; when she announced she was giving her life to God, she signed her name Mary, Sister of St Joseph. At her profession she became, Sister Mary of the Cross. In October 2010, Pope Benedict XVI named her St Mary of the Cross MacKillop and proclaimed that her feast day would be celebrated each year on 8th August. St Mary of the Cross's is a story of courage. Of steadfastness and strength borne out of trust in Divine providence. Of wise words and patience. Never retreating...and most importantly of hope-filled love.



Figure 1 Mary MacKillop - Gratitude by Steve Todd, used with permission

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 Rachel McLean

Leader Formation, Identity and Outreach Directorate, Cairns Diocese

Mary was the name which sustained her. Take a moment now to consider your name. Hold and give thanks for those who gave you your name, who call you by name. Give thanks for your name.

When Mary went to work as a governess at Penola, she took her name and the love of those who gave it to her to all those she encountered on her journey. Mary may not have known the impact she would have on education and outreach networks across Australia; nor the burdens she would bear from those who excommunicated her and worked against her mission. The Holy Spirit knew though, perhaps that's why the Cross became her name. As far as we know, she travelled more and wrote more letters than any other woman in 19th Century Australia. She held God close to her heart, she kept Jesus in her line of site. Even when her brother died as an infant, her mother was drowned in a shipwreck, or when she was excommunicated, she prayed to God and believed that God was with her. Mary teaches us to trust our calling and trust our God. If we believe that God is with us, we can find comfort and strength. When the hard times are over, we can often see that God was there helping us, carrying us along the shoreline, the only set of footprints in the sand.



Figure 2 There you will find God
[Colouring Download](#)

Prayer

Perhaps today you are burdened by the responsibilities of your work; the heaviness of your vocation; the challenges of living in uncertainty. Spend some time now thinking about how you will draw on your strength and the strength of those who love you to amplify your voice for the marginalised and those who need love. Take some time now to ask for the grace to be open to the connections and love you will encounter throughout these days.

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:
 - *Put kind constructions where you can, and where you cannot, be silent. (1878)*
 - *Try always to be generous. (1882)*
 - *Bear with one another, help one another. (1873)*
 - *Let us show love in our acts, bearing with one another. Forgiving and forgetting. (1890)*
 - *Always remember to love one another. (1888)*
- 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](#). Sr Jane encourages us to be witnesses to [Mary's generous kindness](#) by referencing a letter Mary wrote to Sister Josephine McMullen in Rockhampton (1875). Mary refers to the kindness, humility and love that was needed within the Josephite community at the time. Mary wanted to grow kindness - not a spirit of fear but of love for all, she writes: ***"Be then careful, my own darling, and get them all to love you, but not to fear."*** This letter goes on to talk about care for 'foreigners' and was an inspiration for Sr Jane's artwork on refugees. How might your family be a support for newly arrived people and people seeking refuge in our land?

