

Mary MacKillop Resources for Prayer and Liturgy

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Introduction:

This resource is offered as one resource among many that may support classroom teachers in their inclusion of prayer and liturgy in their religious education programs. The focus of the resource is on how Mary MacKillop lived a life of deep personal faith in God, modeled on the example of Jesus, as seen and understood from the scriptures. Because Mary was a woman of deep faith, firmly grounded in the gospel values, and unshakeable in her faith in a loving and compassionate God, she has become for all of us a wonderful sign of hope. Mary's ordinary way of being in the world, with her God and with her neighbor, enabled her to transcend significant hurdles and make a powerful difference to Church and society. As a woman of faith in action, Mary clearly read the signs of her times, attended to the real and practical needs of people around her, and radiated Jesus to the world. Mary was a woman of the Church and her life was immersed in the life and teachings of the Church; it was her faith in God that saw her through particularly difficult and painful times in her life when she struggled with the very Church that she loved.

How to use this resource:

This resource may be used in a variety of ways and settings. At times, teachers may choose to have an informal prayer time in the classroom.

Most teachers already have a prayer focus in their classrooms. It is important to create a sacred space within the room so that children become aware of changing pace and looking to moments of quiet, reflection, silent listening to a gospel story, singing a song, offering prayers of intercession etc.

Stories from the gospel have been suggested, and these are some of the stories that reflect clearly some aspects of Jesus' life and ministry. They also show us something of the way in which Mary MacKillop herself reflected on these same stories and was then moved to action.

A simple Liturgy of the Word is included as a possible way of structuring a more formal prayer time. Once again, the stories from the gospel provide the focus, and there is a reflection on how Mary MacKillop took this gospel message to heart and allowed the Word of God to touch her life and the lives of so many people. Elements of the liturgy have been included, such as the Penitential rite, Liturgy of the Word and prayers of intercession.

In addition to prayer times when children can offer their own prayers, it is good to make use also of some of the more formal prayers of our Christian tradition, prayers which Mary herself would have prayed constantly.

Scriptural themes:

The following themes are reflected in the Scripture passages suggested, and give us a way of understanding Mary MacKillop's deep faith and love of God. For Mary, the Jesus of the gospels is the one on whom she modelled her life and from whom she drew the necessary strength and inspiration to sustain her on her life's journey. When Mary is named a saint, it will mean that the universal Church names and recognises her life as holy and worthy of providing us with practical ways of reflecting Jesus, his love and compassion to the world.

Jesus the Pilgrim:	Jesus journeys through Galilee and preaches in Nazareth	Luke 4:14-21
Jesus and Compassion:	The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:29-37
Jesus included people:	Martha and Mary	Luke 10:38-42
Jesus and Forgiveness:	The Prodigal Son Zaccheus	Luke 15:11-24 Luke 19:1-10
Care for the poor:	The final Judgement Jesus' mission	Matthew 25:34-40 Luke 4:14-21
Jesus invites all:	The most important commandment:	Matthew 22:34-40
Justice:	This is what God asks of us Show kindness and mercy	Micah 6:6-8 Zechariah 7:9-10
Jesus healed people:	The crippled man	Mark 2:1-12
Jesus accepted all people:	Zaccheus Jesus eats at Matthew's house	Luke 19:1-10 Matt. 9:10-13
Jesus brings hope to people:	The lost sheep The most important commandment	Luke 15:3-7 Matt:22:34-40
Jesus welcomed women and children:	The widow's son Jesus blessed the children:	Luke 7:11-17 Matt.19:13-15
Jesus' love of nature and the gifts of creation:		Luke 5:1-3

An understanding of Liturgy:

Liturgy is understood as the work of God

and

the work of the community.

In the Christian tradition, when we use the word Liturgy, we are talking about a time and a space where we want to encounter God and one another; we use our bodies, minds and spirits to praise, thank and bless God, and to ask God to continue to be with us in our daily lives.

When we participate in the liturgy, we bring ourselves and our hopes and joys, our struggles and challenges, and together as a community, we take part in liturgical celebrations: we are invited to full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy.

The purpose of the liturgy:

When we gather as a Christian community to celebrate the liturgy, we come together to remember Jesus and his request that we do so in memory of him. We call to mind the story of Jesus, and we remember that he made God real for us in our daily lives. Liturgy involves a celebration of our faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and our willingness to be a part of that same process in our daily lives. When we are baptized into the Christian community, we are baptized into the life of Jesus; we share in the resurrection and new life of Jesus, and we are called to make a difference in our world.

When we come together to celebrate the liturgy, we come as a community that needs the help and support of Jesus, and God's on-going love and mercy for each one of us. Because we know we are loved by God and we celebrate this each time we gather as a community in the name of Jesus, we can then go out into the world and our daily lives and make a difference to the world because of God's great love for us. We are called to be a part of Jesus' mission to bring the good news of God's love to all the people we meet. Time spent in prayer, as a community, is a wonderful way of bringing us closer to one another and to God. What we share in this time of prayer is what we are then called upon to share with all we meet in our daily lives.

What does God bring to the liturgy?

- Unconditional love
- Mercy
- Forgiveness
- Faithfulness
- Delight in us

What do we bring to the liturgy?

- Ourselves: who we are, as we are;
- Our life experiences
- Our joys and hopes
- Our gifts and all our challenges

Structure of the Liturgy:

In each Eucharistic liturgy we celebrate, the following elements are present:

- The gathering of the community
- The Liturgy of the Word
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist
- The dismissal and sending out on mission

When we come together to celebrate the Eucharist, there are four main parts to the celebration:

Introductory Rites: These rites include:

- the gathering of the community through the entrance procession,
- the welcome and greeting by the celebrant,
- the Penitential rite,
- the opening prayer concluding with the Amen.

Liturgy of the Word: This begins with:

- the first Reading from Scripture
- A psalm sung in response to the reading;
- Gospel acclamation
- Gospel reading
- Homily
- General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

- Preparation of the altar
- Procession of the gifts
- Song to accompany the procession
- Prayers of preparation by the priest
- Prayer over the gifts

- Preface
- Eucharistic Prayer with acclamation

The Communion Rite:

- The Lord's prayer
- Prayer for peace
- Sign of peace
- The Breaking of the Bread
- The Lamb of God
- The invitation to Communion
- The distribution of Communion
- The Communion procession song
- The Prayer after Communion

The Concluding Rite:

- Greeting and response
- Solemn blessing or prayer over the people
- Dismissal
- Going forth song

How do we prepare to celebrate the liturgy?

In our Christian community, we use symbols, prayers, silence and readings from the scriptures to help us to pray and to enter into a special place where we can be more conscious of God's presence in our daily lives and also in the gathered community. When we come together formally in the Church to celebrate as the Christian community, the altar, lectern, crucifix and religious symbols are very much part of that environment.

When we plan a liturgical celebration in another place, such as a classroom or a school or community hall, we need to create a sacred space and attend to the focus for prayer as well as to the sacred symbols we use. Whoever is leading the liturgy or prayer time will also draw attention to the fact that we are now entering a special place for a time of prayer and will call on the group to be still and to become aware of the presence of God in that space with us. Sometimes it is a good practice to play some reflective instrumental music as a means of creating a reflective atmosphere for prayer.

The prayer focus includes a Bible, a candle, coloured cloth, crucifix.

Symbols:

Some of the symbols we use during times of prayer and liturgy include:

- The community gathered together
- A lighted candle: this reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world and is with us always.
- A Bible: we listen to the Word of God in the scriptures.
- Bread and wine: when we celebrate the Eucharist, we offer the gifts of bread and wine that are then given back to us as the body and blood of Christ in Communion;
- The cross is a special Christian symbol, both of the death of Jesus and also as the tree of new life.
- Water: in the waters of baptism we become Christians and members of the Christian community, sharing in the new life of Jesus.
- Oil is a symbol used at Baptism and Confirmation. We are anointed with oil as a sign that we have become members of the Christian community and are being strengthened for our life journey as followers of Jesus.
- The altar is the special place where our gifts are offered and transformed into the body and blood of Christ.
- A lectern is the stand to the side of the altar and this is where the reader proclaims the Word of God from the scriptures.

Prayer:

Prayer is all about our relationship with God. It is a personal relationship and also a relationship that the Christian community shares when it comes together for formal celebrations and rituals. If prayer is about a relationship with God, then God brings something to the relationship and I bring something to relationship. God wants to come close to each one of us and be part of our daily lives; God wants us to know we are loved without end and that we are unique. When we come to prayer, we bring ourselves, our loved ones, our daily concerns, hopes, joys and struggles.

People describe prayer in many different ways. It is a way of being in relationship with God as a companion or friend. It is a way of linking our earthly concerns, needs and wants with something bigger and beyond us. It is a way of being in the presence of God and being thankful for life, for loved ones, for our talents and gifts, for health and happiness. In times of sorrow or struggle, it is a way of being mindful that God is with us and will always be there to support us on our journey through life. Prayer can also be a way of searching for God and meaning in our lives.

Some ways of Praying:

In addition to using formal prayers when we pray, it is also good for us to remember that we can pray when we are out walking, enjoying a sunset or sunrise, being at the beach or in the mountains, swimming in the sea or talking to a friend. Prayer is really about being attentive, recognising that God walks with us through life and is there to guide and support us. When we take time out to enjoy all that God has created for us, this can be a time of prayer and closeness to God when we can lift our heart and mind to God. We can use our own words to talk to God within us. Sometimes it is good to read a passage from the Scriptures to help us in our reflecting about God's presence in our lives. Walking and thinking or reflecting go well together and can be a real time of prayer.

Some different forms of prayer:

- **Lectio Divina:** This is a form of prayer that has a focus on the prayerful reading and reflection on the Word of God in the Scriptures. In this way of praying, we read a passage from Scripture and then take time to think about it. We might read it again and think of one word that stands out for us. What we are doing here is letting the Word of God from the Scriptures speak a message to us and taking a positive message for life from that Scripture reading.
- **Relaxation/guided meditation:** In this form of prayer, again we may use a story from the gospels, after first stilling ourselves and preparing ourselves to be open to hearing and understanding the Word of God for us today. As we prepare to meet God/Jesus in the Scripture story, we use our imagination to become part of the story and to imagine that Jesus is speaking directly to us. This process also helps us to deepen our own relationship with the Jesus of the gospels and it can move us to action.
- **Nature walks:** This activity can easily be used as a form of prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for all that God has created and invited us to care for in our world. Sometimes it is as simple as encouraging children to go for a stroll and simply observe nature, the sights and sounds of nature, living creatures, birds of the air, etc. At the end of the walk, it is good to come together again as a group to reflect on what we have seen, heard and enjoyed about God's creation, and to offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving.
- Prayers of Intercession: these focus on asking God for what we need.
- Prayers of sorrow, thanksgiving and praise.

Formal Prayers:

These are prayers that have been prayed by the Christian community for hundreds of years and include the following:

- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- The sign of the Cross
- Glory be..
- Prayer of sorrow
- Apostles' Creed
- The peace prayer of St. Francis
- The Rosary

Mary MacKillop:

The following are some themes that represent ways of looking at and understanding Mary MacKillop's life and her relationship with God, self, others and the whole of creation. When we reflect on the gospels, we take to heart the message and memory of Jesus and use this as a way of nourishing our lives and [providing us with the inspiration to follow Jesus more truly in our daily lives. These same gospel stories made a profound impact on the life of Mary MacKillop. She lived her daily life, firm in her faith and knowledge and love of Jesus, and she mirrored the same kind of love, mercy, compassion, justice, friendship, forgiveness and understanding to all she met. Mary drew inspiration, support and courage from Jesus; in this we see her greatness as a follower of Jesus. Mary was a living reminder to the people of her time that Jesus is at the centre of our lives; her life pointed to Jesus' life with its sufferings, joys, hopes, delights, challenges and needs. The following reflections show how closely Mary's life was modeled on Jesus' life.

Mary, the Pilgrim:

In her own life, Mary understood what it meant to be a pilgrim, someone journeying, on the way to a new destination. With her family, Mary travelled long distances. When she established the congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph, Mary travelled far and wide to visit her sisters, to encourage them in their own faith/life journeys, to support them with her love, care and example of serving the poor. Mary's journey through life as a pilgrim showed her complete faith and trust that God would provide her with all that she needed to do God's work. During her travels, Mary appreciated the hospitality shown to her by many people; she also enjoyed opportunities to share something of her work with other people, as well as to simply enjoy their companionship.

Compassion and forgiveness:

The life of Mary MacKillop shows us that it is a very human thing to want to be accepted and understood for who we are. Her life also shows us that this does not always happen and that often there are difficult lessons in life for each of us to learn. Mary's life shows us that she was often misunderstood, challenged about what she was doing, and that she suffered greatly as a result. Because Mary lived her life so close to the heart of God, she was able to forgive those who hurt her and she was able to feel compassion towards them. Mary showed great compassion and understanding for those who struggled, who were poor, sick and alone in the world.

Service:

From the gospels, Mary understood what Jesus said to his disciples about how he had come not to be served, but to be of service and to minister to the needs of others. Mary had a heightened awareness, learned at an early age from her family experience, of the need to be of service to any and all people in need. Her way of service was expressed in ordinary, down to earth practical ways.

Prophetic energy:

Mary MacKillop was a woman of amazing energy and dedication spreading the good news about Jesus to all she met, lived and worked with. She may also be called prophetic because in her life she had a deep personal relationship with Jesus and because of this she was able to announce the good news of Jesus to her Church and world. Mary was daring enough to name what needed to happen, particularly regarding the education of children. Mary founded schools to educate the Catholic poor in isolated areas, - something new to our country at the time. Her enthusiasm and dedication drew many to join her in this great work.

Mary, friend of the battlers:

Mary's personal experience of a troubled family life equipped her well with the capacity to understand the day to day struggles of ordinary people to make sense of life, to find employment so that families would be cared for and so that they could live with dignity. In her efforts to be with and support the poor families and individuals with whom she came in contact, Mary showed a deep understanding and love that also helped her to keep going with many of the difficulties and battles she experienced in her own life.

Care for the poor and friend of children:

Mary's love for children grew out of her experience of loving and caring for her own brothers and sisters whom she loved dearly. Her concern was to let them know they were valued and

loved and could make good choices in their lives. In her work of educating children, Mary showed in practical ways that children were important members of society. She also taught compassion and a way of being of service to the poor, out of great love and respect for those in any need.

Trusting in God:

Mary MacKillop learned from her parents the importance of trusting in God. Her whole life showed a firm belief that no matter how big or small the difficulties and challenges she might experience, God would always be by her side. Even when she was misunderstood and let down by Church officials, Mary's faith in God remained strong and carried her through.

Teacher:

Mary's early experience as a governess prepared the way for Mary to become a teacher and she undertook her vocation as a teacher with enthusiasm, commitment and a desire to help children to develop to their capacity. The education children received from Mary and her companions helped them to become good citizens, aware of others and of their ability and responsibility also to be of service to others. In addition to the usual subjects of the day, Mary's students benefited from a good, sound Catholic education.

Mary and suffering:

Suffering played a significant part in the life of Mary MacKillop. She knew what it was to suffer physical pain and illness, and she also knew the pain and suffering of being wrongly accused, misunderstood and isolated from all that she believed in and needed to support her in her life's journey. Once again, it was Mary's deep faith and her closeness to the Jesus who suffered that kept her going and filled her with the hope that God's work would continue to be carried out. Mary united her sufferings and prayers to those of Jesus.

Love of God's Creation:

Mary spent some years of her life in south-eastern Australia and from an early age she learned to delight in all that God created. Her living in this natural environment led her to praise and thank God for all of creation, the wide open spaces, the gum trees, the sea and flowers, the birds of the air, sunrises and sunsets, and much needed rains to water the earth. Mary shared this delight, awe and reverence with all of her students. Fr. Julian Tenison Woods, with his love of nature, scientific study, and reflective approach to nature, was a great role model for Mary.

Care for the earth:

An enthusiastic love of all that God has created led Mary to tread gently on the earth and to care for the earth. This same quality of care has become part of Mary's legacy to us today as we take a shared responsibility in protecting and enjoying our natural environment. Just as God delighted in all of creation, so, too, are we called to care for and take delight in our natural surroundings, giving thanks to God for the gift of life in all its forms.

Woman of justice:

In all that she did and said throughout her life, Mary acted with integrity as a woman of justice. Mary believed in the dignity and worth of every human being she encountered, regardless of their gender, race, faith tradition or occupation. Mary's actions showed that she honoured and valued all people as created in the image and likeness of God. From her reflections on the life and sufferings of Jesus on the Cross, Mary drew comfort and understanding, and she continued to reach out even to those people in her life who caused her suffering.

Woman of faith and truth:

Throughout her life, Mary relied on her faith in a loving compassionate God who would always be her guide and strength, especially when she faced difficulties from within and outside the Church. She was a woman who lived by the truth and was unafraid of those who failed to understand and appreciate what she was doing. Mary lived her life searching for and speaking the truth and relying on God's love.

A Morning Prayer:

Theme: Mary MacKillop cared for the poor and loved children

Gathering song or reflective music**Introduction:**

Mary's love for children grew out of her experience of loving and caring for her own brothers and sister whom she loved dearly. Her concern was to let them know they were valued and loved and could make good choices in their lives. In her work of educating children, Mary showed in practical ways that children were important members of society. She also taught compassion and a way of being of service to the poor, out of great love and respect for those in any need.

Sign of the Cross:**Greeting:**

Leader: The grace and peace of God be with you.

Response: And also with you.

Leader: As we come together today, we remember that we are in the presence of God who loves us and calls us to be followers of Jesus.

Penitential rite:

Leader: Lord Jesus, you came to bring good news to the poor; Lord have mercy.

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you healed the sick; Christ have mercy

All: Christ have mercy.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you were a special friend to children; Lord have mercy.

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Leader: **Let us pray:** Loving God, friend of children and the poor, be with us as we try each day to be messengers of your good news. Through the prayers and example of Jesus and Mary MacKillop, help us to make a difference in our world by being aware of those who are most in need of care and support. May we be generous in sharing what we have and being a friend to those who are alone. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Reading: Luke 4:14-21

Reflection on the Word of God

- What did we hear?
- What does it mean?
- What are we called to do in the light of the gospel message?

Prayers of Intercession:

Leader: We pray for those in need of shelter, clothing and food. Help us to be generous and to share what we have. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who suffer from war and violence. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who have no friends or loved ones to care for them. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who are sick and alone. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the prayers in our hearts this day. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray together in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

Prayer:

Loving God, you sent your Son, Jesus, into the world to bring good news to the poor, happiness to those who are sad and suffering, and hope to those who struggle. Through the example of Jesus, your Son, and the life of Mary MacKillop, may we come to know and love you as they did and show our love and care for the poor and needy in our world. We make our prayers through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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