

A NOVENA OF PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Celebrating the Gift of Mary MacKillop
to our Church and to our World

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*Let God's glory absorb
your thoughts,
deliberations and
actions*

Mary MacKillop - 1904



INTRODUCTION

Mary MacKillop - A Woman of Prayer

Mary MacKillop spoke of God as the God of tender love and a God who takes care of us in all our needs.

May these short reflections lead you into the heart of God.

May you, like Mary MacKillop, discover there the God of tenderness, compassion and goodness.

This Novena of Prayer has been prepared for use in parishes, schools, communities and small groups. It may also be used by individuals. It is a resource which can be used in preparation for her canonisation on 17 October. It may be used on a weekly basis in the nine weeks leading up to her canonisation from 8 August - 17 October or in the nine days prior to canonisation or in any other appropriate way in preparation for this event.

The nine reflections are based on themes related to Mary MacKillop's Life.

Mary MacKillop - Faithful Religious Woman

Mary MacKillop - Advocate for the poor

Mary MacKillop - Teacher and Educator

Mary MacKillop - Model for Pilgrims seeking Christ

Mary MacKillop - Living by the power of the Cross

Mary MacKillop - A woman of the Church

Mary MacKillop - Proclaiming the Gospel

Mary MacKillop - With an openness to other faith traditions

Mary MacKillop - Inspiring people to work for peace and justice

Text: Monica Cavanagh rsj - originally prepared for the Brisbane Archdiocese Canonisation Committee.

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Letters of Mary MacKillop

Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart
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WEEK ONE

Mary MacKillop - Faithful Religious Woman

Introduction

From an early age Mary felt drawn to give herself entirely to God in religious life. Her dream became a reality on 15 August 1867 when she professed vows as a Sister of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in Adelaide, South Australia. In 1891, the Institute was 25 years old. On St Joseph's day she recalled that year the wonders of God, acknowledging how that neither she nor Fr Woods dreamed what would spring from so small a beginning.

Gospel Reading - John 15:16

You did not choose me, no I chose you. And I appointed you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary wrote to her mother on 14 May, 1867,

I have such an earnest longing for the Order of St Joseph and know well how hard it will be to get it established here, but everything God blesses will prosper and surely His blessing attends this holy Order; none other is so fitted for the wants of this Colony.

On August 21 she wrote,

When I parted with you, I little imagined that I could so soon have the happiness of being allowed to make my profession, which I did on my favourite festival, the Assumption.... 'Tis true I only seek to serve God in the care of the little ones of His flock.

Reflective Moment

What is God's invitation to me in my life at this time?

Let us pause to hold in prayer all Religious Women and Men

Prayer

*O Provident God, you called Mary MacKillop to serve you in the religious life.
May young men and women be open to your call to serve you in the religious life.
May the ministry of religious throughout the world, especially the Sisters of St Joseph,
continue to serve the needs of your people as they embrace the Gospel call
to 'act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly' with you their God.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord Amen.
Blessed Mary of the Cross, responding to the Holy Spirit, pray for us.*

Call to Action

Hold in prayer today religious men and women that you know. Phone them or send them a word of encouragement. Read about the work of the Sisters of St Joseph and see how you can become involved. www.sosj.org.au

WEEK TWO

Mary MacKillop - Advocate for the poor

Introduction

Mary's love for Christ was so strong that she sought him out in the poor, sick and suffering. There are many examples in Mary's life where she put aside her own needs in order to serve the sick, lonely and disadvantaged. The children taught by the Sisters often had no shoes to wear. On the night before their First Communion, Mary would have a re-enactment of the Washing of the Feet. This meant all the children would have clean feet for this special occasion in their life.

Gospel Reading - Mark 14:7

For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me.

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary wrote to the Sisters in March 1900,

If choice be given, seek the most neglected places to which He calls us. Let us never forget that, in the spirit of our Rule, it is to those we should desire to go. ... Let us be true to the beautiful spirit of our Institute. ... Let St Joseph's true children remember their mission and seek first the poorest, most neglected parts of God's vineyard.

Reflective Moment

What is my response to those most in need in my community?

Let us pause to hold in prayer the vulnerable, disadvantaged and alienated in our world.

Prayer

Bountiful and loving God,

You filled the heart of Mary MacKillop with compassionate love for those who are in need and those at the margins of our society. Inspired by her example, may we be led by your Spirit to reach out to our brothers and sisters.

Give us generous hearts to respond to the cries of those who are poor in our community and in our world.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessed Mary of the Cross, standing with the vulnerable, pray for us.

Call to Action

Today take time to reach out to someone in need.

WEEK THREE

Mary MacKillop - Teacher and Educator

Introduction

In the spirit of Jesus the teacher, Mary combined a love of children with a desire that education should be available to all. Mary sent her Sisters to remote areas to ensure that economic hardship and distance was no barrier to providing a basic education to those in isolated communities. It also concerned her that people in these far flung communities had very little understanding of their faith. It was remembered by the Sisters that Religious Education classes were to be held at 12 noon. This meant that children in country places who often had to walk to school or do farm duties before they came, did not miss out on what Mary considered the most important lesson of the day.

Gospel Reading - Mark 6:34

As he went ashore he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary to her mother on 22 March 1886,

We introduced the Cardinal to one of our old Adelaide pupils, now a Station Master and travelling on a free Government pass on his vacation. His Eminence smilingly asked how long since he was our pupil and was greatly surprised when he heard him say 'about seven years ago'. I am glad to say the dear lad is a credit to any school and so His Eminence evidently thought.

Reflective Moment

In what ways has my education contributed to the person I am today?

Pause to hold in prayer all teachers, catechists and providers of Religious Education

Prayer

O God, you raised up Mary MacKillop in your Church to found a Religious Order dedicated to the education of children.

*May we, as members of the church today,
be attentive to the children in our midst who receive no education
and to those with little knowledge of their faith.*

May we, like her, follow Christ the teacher as we preach the Gospel through our daily lives.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessed Mary of the Cross, teaching God's little ones, pray for us.

Call to Action

Choose one way in which I can support those who undertake the educational ministry of the church.

WEEK FOUR

Mary MacKillop - Model for pilgrims seeking Christ

Introduction

Even though Mary MacKillop lived a full and active life, she made sure that she spent time each day in prayer and meditation - often late at night. With her focus on Christ she was able to live a holy and exemplary life and she inspires us to do the same. In September, 1873 Mary was invited by Fr Christie SJ to go on the great pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial in honour of the Sacred Heart.

Gospel Reading - John 14:6

I am the way the truth and the life; no-one comes to the Father except through me.

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary wrote to the Sisters on 25 March, 1873,

I am going to Rome, to the feet of the Holy Father, there to implore his sanction for our Holy Rule, and I go full of hope, relying for the success of the undertaking upon the prayers, good observance and charitable dispositions of each and every one of my much loved Sisters.... I will not conceal from you the many perils, many crosses and contradictions which attend this undertaking - many things which might discourage, were it not for a certain sense of God's watchful love which wonderfully strengthens me and which will also, I trust, give you all great courage.

Reflective Moment

In what ways am I presently seeking Christ in my life?

Pause to hold in prayer all those undertaking pilgrimages

Prayer

O God of the pilgrim, Mary MacKillop trusted your guidance in her journey of life.

*We pray that we may grow in the fullness of your love
and the depth of your mystery as she did, so that like her,
we may reach our eternal homeland.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessed Mary of the Cross, pilgrim on life's way, pray for us

Call to Action

Take a reflective walk today being mindful of God's goodness in your life.

WEEK FIVE

Mary MacKillop - Living by the Power of the Cross

Introduction

Mary MacKillop of the Cross suffered hardship from others and regular illness in her own life. She experienced the loss of a number of her siblings in their youth and the tragic death of her mother through drowning. Mary felt these crosses deeply and at times felt like giving up. With time to reflect, Mary MacKillop saw suffering as a blessing from God and an invitation to share in the cross of Christ.

Gospel Reading - John 19:17

So they took Jesus and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary wrote to her mother about the Cross on a few occasions.

My name in religion is Mary of the Cross. 21.8.1867

The Cross is my portion - it is also my sweet rest and support. With the Cross I am happy, without it I would be lost. The only way I have of trying to show my gratitude to God for all that He has done for those I love, and for us in general, is in the Cross. 26.2.1872

To the Sisters she wrote in 1890,

Let not your crosses make you unhappy. Look upon them as stepping stones to an eternity of happiness, and value them as the most precious present from a good and loving God.

Reflective Moment

What cross am I experiencing in my life?

Pause to hold in prayer all those suffering hardship and ill health

Prayer

O God, you suffer with your people in times of hardship. You raised up Mary MacKillop as a woman of faith who lived by the power of the cross. May she inspire us to be strong in faith and hope as we carry our cross each day. Deepen within us that love which leads us through death to life. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Blessed Mary of the Cross, accepting of the cross in life, pray for us

Call to Action

Help to lighten someone's burden today.

WEEK SIX

Mary MacKillop - A Woman of the Church

Introduction

As a baptised Christian Mary MacKillop took seriously the challenge to serve Christ in all peoples especially those who were poor. She trusted in the providence of God to sustain her. As a leader in the church, Mary was often engaging with bishops and priests whom she treated with great integrity and respect. Mary MacKillop was for many a 'sign and instrument of God's love'. She and her Sisters lived in and among the people taking the heart of the church into their midst.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them.

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary wrote to her mother about the situation in Moss Vale in a letter dated 22.3.1886.

I feel an especial interest in the Moss Vale people and they know it. The Cardinal is so pleased with the manner in which they have kept up the Rosary and other devotions when they had no priest, that he intends giving them a resident one as soon as possible.

In Bundaberg it was noted that when the priest was away for long periods the Sisters did many things the priest might have done. Sr Teresa writes to Mary MacKillop on 26.9.1879

I have not much time to write as we were up the last few nights, I may say, with a poor woman, who died last night. Poor thing. She died such a happy death. She thought she would see Fr Rossolini again, but will not poor thing. She was in such pain.

Reflective Moment

How do I see my role in today's church?

Pause to hold in prayer all those involved in ministry within the church.

Prayer

O God, you call us all to follow you in the way of Jesus.

*Gift us with wisdom and understanding as you did Mary MacKillop,
to be faithful servants of the Gospel.*

May your love enfold those who bear the responsibility of leadership in our church.

May we rejoice in the gift of Mary MacKillop to our church.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessed Mary of the Cross, gift of God to us today, pray for us

Call to Action

Offer a word of affirmation to a person carrying out ministry in the name of the church.

WEEK SEVEN

Mary MacKillop - Proclaiming the Gospel

Introduction

For Mary MacKillop people were equally important whatever their beliefs. She was at home with people of any class or culture, and showed great respect and love for all. She proclaimed Christ's message as much by example as by word. When someone was in trouble she would go in person to attend to the situation. When the kerosene lamp exploded in Port Augusta, and two of her Sisters were critically injured Mary went at once to be with them, even though it was a difficult journey. She arrived in time to be with Sr Laurencia Honner until she died. She stayed with Sr Stanislaus Punyer, the other member of the community, for a week to console and to encourage her.

Gospel Reading: John 13:14-15

So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

In 1875 Mary wrote to Sr Josephine McMullen the Provincial in Queensland.

Be kind to the poor foreigners. Remember that I was a foreigner once, and as such was never laughed at nor unkindly criticized.

Mary wrote to the Sisters in 1873 after the death of Dr Benson who had cared for the Sisters in Adelaide with great generosity.

Dr Benson left very little provision for his wife and children; his too generous heart never allowed him to save. We have offered to educate, for the present, Lottie and the younger boys. Poor Mrs Benson is most grateful.

Reflective Moment

How am I being called to witness to the Gospel in my present reality?

Let us hold in prayer all who proclaim the Gospel by word and deed.

Prayer

God, you call us through our Baptism to give witness to the Gospel in word and action.

May we, like Mary MacKillop, teach by our example that you are a God of love and forgiveness.

May your word be on our lips and in our hearts as we proclaim your Gospel.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessed Mary of the Cross, witness to the Gospel, pray for us.

Call to Action

Find an opportunity today to bear witness to the Gospel in word or deed.

WEEK EIGHT

Mary MacKillop - With openness to those of other faith traditions

Introduction

Mary MacKillop befriended people of other Christian denominations and faith traditions at a time when this practice was uncommon. In turn they offered her great friendship and support and valued her respect and loving concern. Johanna and Robert Barr Smith were two who became close friends. Her example invites us to work for the unity of all Christians and to be involved in Interfaith Dialogue.

Gospel Reading - John 17:20

I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word; that they may all be one.

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Johanna Barr Smith was an Anglican woman who became a great friend and supporter of Mary MacKillop. The marble slab on Mary MacKillop's tomb at North Sydney was Johanna's last gift to Mary MacKillop. Mary wrote to Sr Annette Henschke

I want you to let me know where a letter will find Mrs B. Smith on her birthday ... I am sending a telegram today to get Sr Patricia to hand paint a birthday card and send it here to me by Wednesday's mail, so that I can write and post it to her by Fridays' train at the latest. Something nice - just a birthday one.

Reflective Moment

How has my life been enriched by encounters with people from other faith traditions?

Let us hold in prayer all our relatives and friends from other faith traditions

Prayer

*God the source of all goodness,
you invite us to work towards the unity of all Christians through prayer,
study and action with our brothers and sisters as we work towards the unity of all Christians. You
enrich our lives as we enter into dialogue with people from other faith traditions.
May we like Mary MacKillop be open to your presence in the friendships
we share with those beyond our Catholic tradition.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen
Blessed Mary of the Cross, open to God's presence active in our world, pray for us*

Call to Action

Find an opportunity to speak with a person from another faith tradition.

WEEK NINE

Mary MacKillop - Inspiring people to work for peace and justice

Introduction

Whenever Mary MacKillop saw a need she set out to respond. Mary sought always to bring about justice and required her followers to do the same. While she challenged unjust behaviour Mary always showed great respect for people and worked for peace and harmony in all situations. She did her best at the time of the excommunication to prevent the matter going into the public media. Similarly she endeavoured to quieten the public critics of the Bishop Quinn in Brisbane.

Gospel Reading - John 20: 21

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me so I send you.'

From the Pen of Mary MacKillop

Mary wrote to her mother on 26 February 1872 after the excommunication was lifted.

The Bishop has acknowledged the injustice of his conduct to all, for priests, as well as Sisters, have been wronged, but God wisely permitted it for a hidden and mysterious end. I hope that our common sorrows have done us all good and that Adelaide will once more have holy and exemplary priests doing the work of God in her midst.

Reflective Moment

What inspires me to work for peace and justice in our world?

Let us pause and hold in prayer all those working to bring justice and peace in our world

Prayer

O God of peace, you sent your Son as a gift of peace into our world.

You have revealed that peacemakers are to be called your children.

Grant, we pray, that like Mary MacKillop we will work without ceasing to establish that justice which alone will ensure true and lasting peace.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Blessed Mary of the Cross, defending human dignity, pray for us.

Call to Action

Take time to resolve a conflict that exists in your life.

A Pilgrim Prayer

God of all journeys
you guide us always through expected and unexpected ways.

Bless us as we journey towards canonisation to celebrate with joy Australia's gift of Mary
MacKillop to the world.

May we honour you, through her, in all our travels.

May we also journey one in spirit, mind and heart.

May we be, as Mary is, a hopeful sign
of peace and unity to all.

We offer this prayer through the incarnate Christ
who loved our world as you do
and who is your greatest gift to us.

Amen.



*God will carry you through every
struggle
Mary MacKillop
20.11.1870*

For further information visit
www.marymackillop.org.au

