

MEDIA RELEASE

Drawing on the wisdom of Saint Mary MacKillop through National Vocations Awareness Week

Each year the Church celebrates National Vocations Awareness Week. This week is dedicated to promoting the various expressions of Christian vocation with a focus on promoting priesthood and consecrated life.

This year, a group of Josephite Sisters and Affiliates have been asked to contribute video content about their Ministries and how they participate in God's mission today.

"The response has been extremely pleasing, and we are thrilled to showcase the great works of these individuals," said Kathleen Norman, Communications Manager, Sisters of Saint Joseph. "The first of the content series will be launched on Sunday 2 August in time for the start of National Vocations Awareness Week, and then continue throughout the remainder of this year."

Drawing from reflection on Saint Mary MacKillop's experience, Sister Monica added: "My advice to young Australians of faith is – be the voice of the gospel and the face of God in the world today. Be courageous; use your passion and energy to address the critical issues facing the world and church today."

During these unusual times throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows us there is a new openness to the sharing of faith in 2020. Australians have turned to prayer during the coronavirus with many wanting to spend more time growing their faith once restrictions are lifted.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph believe that Saint Mary MacKillop would offer encouragement during these difficult times. In 1907 she wrote to the Sisters: "*We must let no obstacles deter us from proceeding with courage in the path marked out for us. It may sometimes be dark and full of windings, but a beautiful bright light shines at the end of this path and a few more windings will bring us to it.*"

Sr Monica Cavanagh, Congregational Leader, believes strongly that Mary MacKillop is with us. "Her own experience of life leads us to be in deep communion with her. We remember that Mary herself suffered from ill-health and will be close to all those whose health has been impacted by the COVID-19. She was close to death on a few occasions and found comfort in those who shared these times with her."

Saint Mary MacKillop herself wrote about her testing experience of being dangerously unwell:

"I was for many weeks dangerously ill, so ill that I nearly died... I was weary of the world and its crosses... The mental conflict had been too much for me."

- Lesley O'Brien, *Mary MacKillop Unveiled*, p.145

Drawing from that insight into Saint Mary MacKillop's experience, Sister Monica added: "My advice to young Australians of faith is – be the voice of the gospel and the face of God in the world today. Be

courageous; use your passion and energy to address the critical issues facing the world and church today.”

The opening prayer of the Liturgy for Saint Mary MacKillop’s Feast Day on 8 August begins:

“Holy God, source of all goodness, you show us in Mary MacKillop a woman of faith who lived by the power of the cross.

On this feast day let us be mindful that Mary MacKillop stands at the cross with us encouraging us to keep alive the flame of hope, bringing solace to those who have lost loved ones or employment, and comforting those whose lives have been changed for ever through the COVID-19 pandemic. For Mary MacKillop the Cross became the Tree of Life. Walking in and through the Cross she drew strength from the God who loved her. Mary MacKillop embraced the suffering in her life and shows us how to persevere in the face of adversity. We take to heart her message: “God is good and has brought light and help when all was very dark.”

- 1899

The Sisters of Saint Joseph look forward to sharing their message of hope and faith. Saint Mary MacKillop’s enduring wisdom can speak today during throughout National Vocations Week from 2 – 9 August 2020.

Note for Editors

The Sisters of Saint Joseph minister throughout Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Peru, East Timor, Scotland and Brazil. The Congregation was founded in Penola, South Australia in 1866 by Mary MacKillop and English priest Reverend Julian E Tenison Woods. The Sisters of Saint Joseph have Ministries that support prisoner welfare, people living with disability, anti-trafficking and slavery programs, refugees, schools and young people, and indigenous people, amongst other areas.

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