

Be **Fierce** for **Fair**



MARY
MACKILLOP
today

Prayer Assembly - Secondary

We Gather

Gather the assembled into quiet stillness.

Then play the following soundscape:

[A Morning in the Australian Bush](#)

[School Playground Sounds](#)

[Sound of a Bus Trip in Timor-Leste](#)

[Timorese Children Singing at School](#)

Read

We have just travelled from the Australian bush, to the school playground, on a bus in Timor Leste and have concluded with children singing at a school in Timor Leste. It might seem strange on a day that we remember, honour and celebrate Australia's First Saint – Mary of the Cross MacKillop that we travel beyond our borders to those of one of our closest neighbour Timor Leste.

Mary MacKillop is remembered for saying 'Never see a need without doing something about it'. She certainly didn't. She realised that children growing up in Australia weren't all able to go to school so she began teaching them. She, along with Fr Julian Tension Woods established her first school in Penola SA in 1866. Other women joined her and together they formed the Sisters of St Joseph. They travelled throughout the country establishing schools wherever they saw the need. We are blessed by schools that were established by the Sisters of St Joseph all around Australia today. Over 30 years ago they travelled to Timor Leste where they saw many children didn't have access to education, a basic human right. So they are working to do the same for the children of Timor Leste. Mary MacKillop inspired sisters of her time to respond to the needs to the community. They in turn have inspired each generation following to do the same and so today the work of Mary MacKillop lives on in Timor Leste by an organisation known as Mary MacKillop Today.



Feast of Saint Mary MacKillop - 8 August



We Gather

Let us pause to pray.

God of compassion and love,

You blessed our land with a courageous woman in St Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

Open our hearts to hear your voice in her story.

Teach us to embrace what she pioneered: new ways of living the gospel that respect and defend the human dignity of all.

We ask this in your name.

Amen.

We Listen

Colossians 3:12-17

Read

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians.

‘As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.





We Respond

Reflection Option 1

Reflect

(Play quiet music as each section is read. Each of Mary's quotes could be displayed on a screen. Pause between reading each paragraph and the reflection questions.)

Read

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, wrote many letters throughout her extraordinary life. Most of her letters she wrote to her family, the Sisters of St Joseph and to Fr Tension Wood – her co-founder and friend. Many of her words are as relevant today as they were when they were written. Looking back we can see she didn't just write them. She lived them. Today, on Mary's Feast Day we remember her as Australia's First Saint, a courageous woman who like Jesus, advocated for those on the fringes of society – the least, the lonely and the lost and we reflect on many of her words.

1. Mary MacKillop was a practical woman. In 1867 she wrote, "Never see a need without doing something about it." She saw that families living in poverty and many children didn't have access to education and safe shelter. So she started opening schools.

What needs have I seen in my community? What can I do about it?

2. Mary knew what it was like to be separated from members of her family. She wrote to her mother in 1883. "It felt so hard to leave you alone that day in Ballarat..." Mary had a community of women around her and devoted her life to making sure that families had not only what they needed but what they deserved.

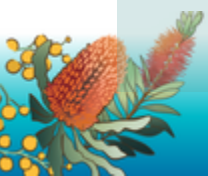
What can I do to stay in touch with my family? What could I do for families in my community, especially new arrivals in our country?

3. Mary endured great stress when for a time she was excommunicated, and again in the 1880s when she saw her sisters suffering. She wrote of feeling the effects of years of care and anxiety, and of the pain caused by disharmony. "It seemed only to require this quarrel with a Bishop I loved to make me almost completely break down."

How do I react in times of suffering, stress and anxiety? How can I help others in their time of suffering, stress and anxiety?

4. "God has watched over your interests and given you far greater blessings than you are perhaps aware of..." Mary never forgot the gifts God had granted her. She was forever grateful and made sure she thanked God.

What blessings has God given you? How can God use you to bless those around you?





We Respond

Reflection Option 2

Reflect

(Students recite 'Standing on the Shoulders' as a poem or chorus. Set a space up at the front of the assembly, where 3 or 4 students could sit on the ground, the same on chairs, standing behind them, and if a step or stage is available some standing, or sitting on it. Begin the reflection by having the students sitting in these spaces.)

The students seated on the floor begin by saying: We're standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us.

The students on the floor repeat the statement with those seated on the chairs joining in. Keep adding in another row of voices until all students at the front say: We're standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us.

(The following song is recited as a poem.

Suggested ways of delivery to engage those listening include: slam poetry, different lines different students or each line echoed.)

We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us
We are stronger for their courage, we are wiser for their words
We are lifted by their longing for a fair and brighter future
We are grateful for their vision, for their toiling on this Earth

We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us
They are saints and they are humans, they are angels, they are friends
We can see beyond the struggles and the troubles and the challenge
When we know that by our efforts things will be better in the end

They lift me higher than I could ever fly
Carrying my burdens away
I imagine our world if they hadn't tried
We wouldn't be here celebrating today

We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us
We are honoured by their passion for our hallowed halls
We will stand a little taller, we will work a little longer
And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me.





Although not written about Mary MacKillop what we just heard could well have been. As Australia's First Saint, she is a giant on whose shoulders many schools and communities stand on. She was a courageous woman who like Jesus, advocated for those on the fringes of society – the least, the lonely and the lost. Her legacy challenges us to do the same. Let us pause and reflect on some of her words and how we can put them into action.

Be faithful in little things (1873)

Make allowances for those who do not see as you do. (1867)

If we cannot speak well, let us be silent (1909)

May God help me to do what is right. (1898)

Forgive me for everything I have done to pain or disappoint any one of you. (1881)

How I yearn for you to trust in God – to be without fear (1908)

There where you are you will find God (1871)

Let love guide you in all your life. (1873)

(The quotes above could be displayed on a screen as each of them is read out.)

Song: Never See a Need

We Go

Pray

Compassionate and loving God, you filled the heart of Mary MacKillop with love for those in need. We stand on her shoulders knowing what love for another can do. Fill our hearts will love. Empower us to respond in the most loving way to the cries of the least, the lonely and the lost in our world.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

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Sing

Suggestions:

- Hearts of Courage - Timothy Hart
- Go Make a Difference - Steve Angrisano
- Do Something - Matthew West
- Let it Start with Me - No Other Name
- Hands and Feet - Audio Adrenaline





Resources

Books:

- Geddes, Judith, In God's Hands, Psalms & Prayers for Children - In the Spirit of Mary MacKillop, St Joseph's Convent, St Albans, VIC, Australia, 2005.
- Kane, Sue & Leo, A Daily Cuppa with Mary and Julian, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, NSW, Australia 2019.
- Kane, Sue & Leo, The Little Brown Book – Mary MacKillop's spirituality in our everyday lives, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, NSW, Australia 2009.
- Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph. Praying with Mary MacKillop. North Sydney, Australia, 2010.

Websites:

- Big Start Assemblies: www.bigstartassemblies.org/prayer
- Liturgy Brisbane: www.liturgybrisbane.net.au
- Mary MacKillop Today: www.marymackilloptoday.org.au
- Sisters of St Joseph: www.sosj.org.au

