



MARY MACKILLOP PLACE

Liturgy and Prayer Resources

ST MARY MACKILLOP
FEAST DAY
CELEBRATION 2024
8th August



First Reading: 1 Kings 17:8-16

The stream in the place where Elijah lay hidden dried up, for the country had no rain.

And then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, 'Up and go to Zarephath, a Sidonian town, and stay there. I have ordered a widow there to give you food.' So he went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a vessel for me to drink.' She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. 'Please' he said 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As the Lord your God lives,' she replied 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go ahead and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and your son.

For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel:

*"Jar of meal shall not be spent,
jug of oil shall not be emptied,
before the day when the Lord sends
rain on the face of the earth."*

The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.

Psalm: Ps 62:1-8

R. My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.

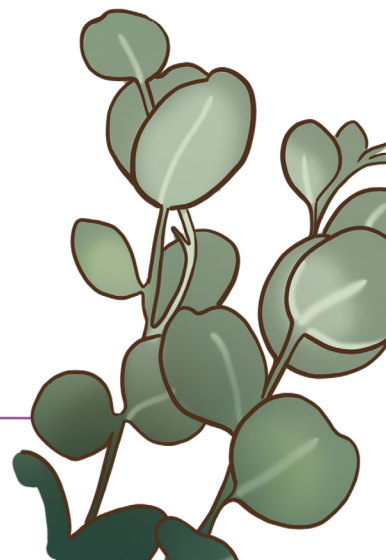
O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water. **R.**

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise. **R.**

So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy. **R.**

On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. **R.**

*If the Psalm is being sung we suggest you use
"The Cry of the Poor"
John Foley sj.*



Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

Many women were by the cross, watching from a distance, the same women who had followed Jesus and looked after him.

Alleluia!



Gospel: Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus said to his disciples:

That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life
and what you are to eat,
nor about your body and how you are to clothe it.
Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing!

Look at the birds in the sky.
They do not sow or reap or gather into barns;
yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are you not worth much more than they are?
Can any of you, for all his worrying,
add one single cubit to his span of life?
And why worry about clothing?
Think of the flowers growing in the fields;
they never have to work or spin;
yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these.

Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field
which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow,
will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith?
So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat?
What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?"
It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things.

Your heavenly Father knows you need them all.
Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness,
and all these other things will be given you as well.
So do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

Solemn Blessing

- Celebrant** Through the example of Saint Mary of the Cross, may you learn to recognise God's will for you and trust in his providence.
- Assembly** Amen.
- Celebrant** May her life of service awaken in you a deep respect for the poor and a strong will for justice.
- Assembly** Amen.
- Celebrant** May you share in her courage, see with the eyes of Christian love, and learn from her holy deeds.
- Assembly** Amen.
- Celebrant** May the blessing of almighty God, the Father, † and the Son, and the Holy, Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.



COMMENTARY ON THE READINGS

First Reading: 1 Kings 17:7-16

The effects of the drought now even reach Elijah as the stream which provided him with water dries up. But it is not a sign of God withdrawing his providence; rather it is a sign that a new stage in the story is about to unfold.

God tells Elijah now to go to Zarephath of Sidon, a town on the Mediterranean coast between the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon (the only Gentile places we are told that Jesus visited during his public life). In effect, Elijah is being told to go to the territory ruled over by Jezebel's father and thus to the very centre from which the worship of Baal had originated. Elijah must have found it a strange command but he put his trust in the Lord and went. This whole story is about trust in God's providence and care.

Elijah receives a promise that he will be looked after there not now by birds but by a poor widow, herself on the point of starvation. Moreover, she is a Gentile, in Jewish eyes a pagan. Just one more example of how God's people were sustained by people they despised and avoided. Elijah, as the bearer of God's word, was now to be sustained by human hands, but they were the hands of a poor widow facing starvation. She was, moreover, from outside the circle of God's own people. She was from the pagan nation that at that time (much like Egypt earlier and Babylon later) represented the forces arrayed against God's people.

Once again, showing his deep trust in God's care of him, Elijah goes off and, as promised, finds the widow gathering sticks. He asks for a little water to drink and she goes off to get some for him. However, as she is leaving, Elijah also asks for a little bread to eat. Here she demurs.

"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she began. Her oath in the name of the Lord was either in deference to Elijah the Israelite or even a recognition of Elijah's God. She told him that she had only a very small amount of flour in her house and a little oil. She was now gathering firewood to prepare a final meal for herself and her son. After that, with nothing more to eat, they were prepared to face death.

"Do not be afraid," said Elijah – a phrase that comes up again and again in both the Old and New Testaments and often used by Jesus himself. He tells her to go and make the meal for her son but first to prepare a small cake for him. The widow is asked to give all she has to sustain the bearer of the word of God. The demand to give her all is in essence the demand of the covenant that Israel had broken.

Elijah then cites to her a promise from the Lord: she will not want for flour or oil until the day the rains return. In a marvellous act of trust she agrees. She reminds one of the widow in the Gospel who donated all she had to the Temple treasury. This Gentile woman's trust is also in strong contrast to the Israelites who had bound themselves by covenant to unconditional and total service of their Lord but had reneged on it so often and were doing so again.

The truth of Elijah's promise was soon confirmed for the widow. For the jar of meal and jug of oil were never again empty for one whole year. By her act of faith the woman received the promised blessing, while Israel had forsaken the covenant and followed Baal and Asherah in search of prosperity. Now in the midst of a pagan kingdom a widow realises that the trustful obedience to the word of God is the way that leads to life.

God miraculously provided for this non-Israelite who, in an act of faith in the Lord's word, had laid her life on the line. He gave her "manna" from heaven even while he was withholding food from his unfaithful people in the promised land.

The whole story is a teaching about trusting in God's care for us. Later, in his home town of Nazareth, Jesus will use the example of this Gentile woman as well as the cure by Elisha of Naaman the leper from Syria as examples of Gentiles having more faith than God's own people. Jesus was not able to heal many in Nazareth because of their refusal to see in him anyone but one of their neighbours.

This story reminds us too that the secret of life is for everyone to share generously of what they have. When that happens, no one is in want. When everyone gives, everyone gets.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Today we have the final reading from this Letter and it is a continuation of yesterday's reading. After warning against some negative behaviour in yesterday's passage, Paul makes some beautiful statements today on the kind of people the Colossian Christians should be.

The Colossians are "the chosen of God, the holy people whom he loves" and, because of that, they are to be clothed in compassion, generosity, humility, gentleness and patience. When they "put on" Christ at their baptism, all these qualities also needed to be part of what they "wore".

Israel were the original Chosen People but now the Christian community shares this name. Being chosen by God is a constant theme in Paul's letter but the Scriptures never teach that our being chosen frees us from being responsible for our behaviour. We will not be saved against our will.

On the contrary, as Paul says here, it is precisely because Christians have been chosen for eternal salvation that they must exert every effort (with God's grace) to live a life in harmony with example set by Christ. For Paul, divine kingship and human responsibility go hand in hand.

They are, he says, God's "holy people", his 'saints' (hagioi, 'agioi). By that he does not mean that they are all canonisable; that was clearly not the case. The word 'saint' was applied to the Christians in general. Their holiness was less a matter of their own efforts than their having been sanctified through Baptism and their incorporation in the Christian community. They were 'holy' by reason of their being called, being chosen. "I have chosen you, you have not chosen me," as Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper. The word hagioi also implies someone who is different, set apart from the common crowd. Christians, by their lifestyle, are called to act as a counter-witness to the prevailing values of most societies – the salt of the earth, the leaven in the dough.

Frictions, divisions and disunity can never be totally avoided but Paul says they must be dealt with by a high level of tolerance and acceptance of others and a readiness for forgiveness and reconciliation. The reason is simple: "The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same." The Gospel has much to say on this – Peter being told to forgive 70 times 7 times and the parable of the unforgiving servant; the command to love our enemies, to pray for them and bless them...

And so, the most important, the all-enveloping article of clothing must be love, "the perfect bond". Love is the central commandment. The "new" commandment is that we love each other as Christ has loved us and the greatest love is to give one's life for one's friends. With this in place, everything else – absolutely everything else – is taken care of.

If all this is done, then the next prayer is likely to become a reality: "May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it was for this that you were called together in one Body." Once we are totally united with Christ and his way of living, then we are where we belong, we are responding to the deepest needs of our being – the result can only be a sense of inner peace and harmony, even if all round us there are storms. (That surely is the meaning of the story of the disciples in the boat with Jesus in a stormy sea. With Jesus in the boat there came a great calm.)

And when that peace comes, let us also be thankful. Gratitude is a sentiment that must surface constantly in the Christian heart as gifts are piled on us one after the other, beginning with the very gift of life and the gift of the Good News about Jesus. Our most important act together is the celebration of the Eucharist. The word means 'thanks'.



In the final part of the reading, Paul speaks about how the Colossians should pray and worship together:

- Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home in you.

This refers especially to Christ's teaching, which in the time of the Colossians was still being transmitted orally. By implication and, especially for us, it includes the Old and the New Testaments. It is a sad fact that, for so many Catholics, the Word of Christ in the Scriptures does not find a home in their lives. For so long the teaching Church was so wary of 'private interpretation' that Catholics were discouraged from reading even the Gospel. It is a situation which urgently needs to be remedied and these commentaries on the daily Mass readings are intended to be a small contribution in that direction.

- Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom.

What we need is not just knowledge or information about our faith but the wisdom which comes from deep insight into its meaning for our lives. There is also a wisdom in the whole group, which individuals do not have. Again, for so many Catholics, 'teaching' is what goes on in school under the heading of 'religious knowledge' but long experience has shown that it all too often does very little to build up a deep faith and sense of belonging in the Christian community. It is often totally divorced from both family and parish life. In more recent times, there have been movements towards more 'faith sharing' and 'Bible sharing'. The whole of the liturgical experience, too, and not just the homily, should be a mutually teaching experience of what it means to belong to a Christian community.

- With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God.

Some of the most important doctrines were expressed in Christian hymns preserved for now only in Paul's letters. "Psalms" could also describe a song newly composed for Christian worship (cf. 1 Cor 14:26, where 'hymn' is literally 'psalm' in the Greek text).

A "hymn" was a song of praise, especially used in a celebration, much like the Old Testament psalms that praised God for all that he is. A "song" recounted the acts of God and praised him for them, much like the Old Testament psalms that thanked God for all that he had done. "Inspired songs" could be charismatic improvisations suggested by the Spirit during liturgical assembly.

Paul here is expressing our need to come together to pray and share our faith and to praise and give thanks to our God and Jesus his Son. Again, this is something to be done in a genuinely communal spirit of celebration and prayer and not merely as the carrying out of a command or obligation by an individual. For us, it concerns the way we conduct our liturgies, especially that of the Eucharist.

For congregations where the vast majority could not read or write, songs were an important part of worship and prayer and that is probably the same in some parts of the world today. Literacy has had the very negative effect, again in mainly Catholic circles, of reducing the role of music and song in our worship, especially where the active participation of the congregation is concerned. Yet, someone said very truly that "he who sings prays twice". One has only to attend Masses where there is no music and those where the whole congregation sings (and even dances) to appreciate the difference. It is time we took Paul's advice more to heart.

Paul sums up his exhortation by urging that "whatever you say or do, let it be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him". In our liturgies, every prayer we make to the Father is made "through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever".

Every single thing we Christians do is done for him. All is for the greater glory of God. We try to seek and find and respond to him in every experience, in every person we meet. We wish that our every thought, intention, action and response be directed solely to the praise and service of our Lord. Let us learn to be aware that every moment, every happening of our day is a sacred point of contact with God.



Gospel: Matthew 6:24-34

We continue with Jesus' teaching on our attitude to material and visible things.

We have to make a choice between the vision of life that Jesus offers or a preoccupation with money and possessions. They are not compatible. They involve conflicting goals in life and different visions of what is most important in life. The truly materialistic person may have a veneer of Christian practice but cannot be a really committed Christian and vice versa.

Jesus preaches what St Ignatius Loyola calls 'indifference' to material things. Obviously some material things – like food and clothing and shelter – are necessary to daily living. At different times other things will be necessary too.

The attitude of 'indifference' is not that one does not care; on the contrary, one cares very much. But one cares to have things and to use things only in so far as they are needed to love and serve God and others for his sake. Jesus urges us to liberate ourselves from worry and anxiety about our body and material things such as food and clothing.

To be concerned about food because right now I am very hungry and do not have any is very different from worrying whether I will have food next month; to be anxious about what is happening when I am in intensive care is very different from wondering how long my health will hold up in the coming years; to be fretting because I have no money to pay my rent with the landlord knocking at the door is very different from wondering whether I will ever be rich.

Worry and anxiety about the future are a waste of time and energy yet we indulge in them so much. We are invited to look at the birds of the air and the flowers in the field. They do nothing except be themselves and God takes care of them. And how beautiful they are! When their time comes they pass away.

We are often so busy regretting the past or worrying about the future that we never get to enjoy life. Enjoyment and happiness are only in the present. Nowhere else. If we keep looking forward or looking back we will never find happiness. And yet it is right here in our grasp at every moment of every day. As Fr Tony de Mello used to say, "You have everything you need right now to be happy." How our lives would be transformed if only we could really believe that! Because happiness can only be in the NOW. Yesterday's happiness is gone; tomorrow's does not exist. If I am not happy now, I never will be.

So, to follow the advice of Jesus today, "Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself." God is in the here and now and nowhere else. He is always available.

Scripture Commentary

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Scripture Psalms and Lectionary

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The Universal Prayer

Thursday 8th August 2024 – Solemnity of St Mary of the Cross (co-patron of Australia)

Celebrant: Today we rejoice in the Solemnity of St Mary of the Cross whose life of service to those most in need and of trust in the Providence of God, is an example for all people of goodwill.

1. That all who live in Australia, placed under the patronage of St Mary of the Cross, will grow in respect for one another, have a concern for the poor, and work together to make Australia a hospitable, free and safe nation. Let us pray to the Lord.
2. That the commitment of St Mary of the Cross to the Catholic education of children will strengthen the resolve of all Catholic Schools today to provide for the spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional strength of children and young people. Let us pray to the Lord.
3. That the aged, sick, young women in difficulties and prisoners, who experienced St Mary of the Cross's practical care in the 19th century, will not become the forgotten people of today, but be given respect and every help they need. Let us pray to the Lord.
4. That all people of faith in this nation will learn from the respect St Mary of the Cross showed to people of other Churches and Faiths, and so grow in understanding of one another, respect religious freedom and seek to live peacefully together under One God. Let us pray to the Lord.
5. That the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, founded by St Mary of the Cross, may, in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Timor Leste, Peru and Brazil, trust in the Providence of God, be faithful to her vision and mission and receive the blessing of new vocations. Let us pray to the Lord.
6. That those services and communities, dedicated to St Mary of the Cross will be true to her spirit of faith and practical charity. Let us pray to the Lord.

Celebrant: God, may we always trust in your providence,
knowing that you hear the cry of the poor
and lead us all in the ways of charity and justice.
Through Christ our Lord.



HYMNS

St Mary MacKillop Hymns, Mantras and Song by Monica Brown

Mary of the Cross

St Mary of the Cross Litany – Adult and Youth Version

Too Deep For Words – Adult, Youth and Children’s Version

Your God Is There – Adult, Youth and Children’s Version

St Mary MacKillop We Sing Praise – Children’s Version

True Colours by Michael Mangan

Radiating Hope

Free The World

Justice and Freedom

Setting Hearts on Fire by Michael Mangan

Make a Little Difference

In God and For God by Jen Charadia

12 hymns based on sayings of Mary MacKillop

Passover Saturday by Kevin Bates sm

Dream Lady

God of Surprises by Br Michael Herry fsm

From Penola’s Plains

A Blessings Hymn for Australia

Dare to Dream by Br Michael Herry fsm

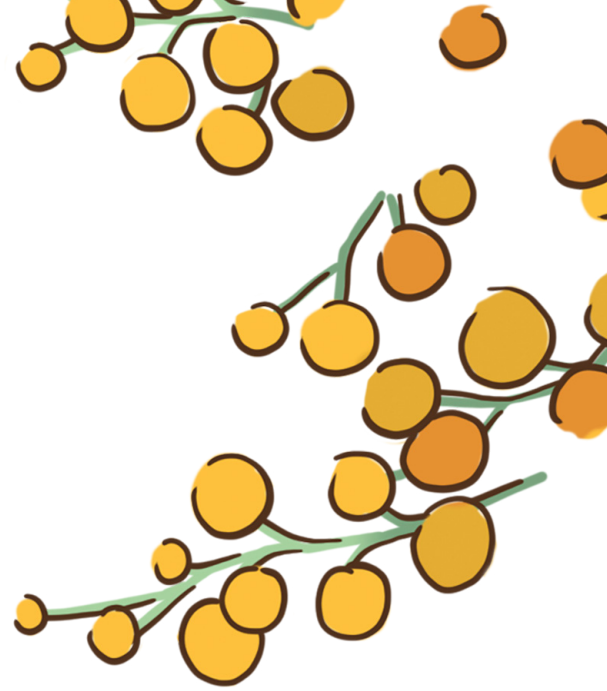
Woman for Today

Lord Teach Me Your Ways by John Burland

Mother Mary of the Cross

Available through Willow Publishing

We Are Travellers – Trish Watts & Monica O’Brien



General

Christ Be Our Light – Bernadette Farrell

Come To The Feast – Marty Haugen

Glory and Praise to Our God – Daniel Schutte

God Beyond All Names – Bernadette Farrell

Here I Am Lord – Daniel Schutte

The Cry of the Poor – John Foley

Bring Forth the Kingdom – Marty Haugen

Come to the Feast – Andrew Chin

In the Brightness – Robin Horner

Our Supper Invitation – Kevin Bates sm

We Remember – Marty Haugen

Open My Eyes Lord – Jessie Manibusan

We Gather at Your Table – Andrew Chin

Table of Plenty – Daniel Schutte

Ancient Land Of Wide And Sunburnt Plains

– A Blessings Hymn For Australia

– Br Michael Herry fsm

The Servant Song - Richard Gillard

We Are Many Parts – Marty Haugen

Seek Ye First – Karen Lafferty

Take Christ To The World – Paul Inwood

READINGS FOR CHILDREN

First Reading: 1 Kings 17:10-16

Elijah went to Zarephath,
and near the city gate he saw a widow gathering sticks for a fire.
He asked her to bring him a cup of water.
When she started off to get the water, he asked,
“Would you also please bring me a piece of bread?”
The widow answered, “In the name of the living Lord your God,
I swear that I don’t have any bread!
All I have is a handful of flour and a little olive oil.
I’m on my way home now with these few sticks
to cook what I have for my son and me.
After that, we’ll starve to death.”
Elijah told the woman, “Don’t worry!
Do as you have said
and fix something for yourself and your son.
But first, make me a small piece of bread.
The Lord God of Israel has promised
that your jar of flour won’t become empty,
and your jar of oil won’t dry up
before he sends rain for the crops.”
The widow left and did exactly what Elijah had told her.
So every day Elijah and the widow and her family had food to eat.
There was always flour and oil, just as the Lord had promised and Elijah had said.



Responsorial Psalm: Ps 31:1-3

R. Into your hands, O Lord, I entrust my spirit.

I come to you, Lord, for protection.
Don’t let me be ashamed.
Do as you have promised and rescue me.
Listen to my prayer. **R.**

Hurry to save me.
Be my mighty rock and the fortress where I am safe.
You, Lord God, are my mighty rock and my fortress.
Lead me and guide me, so that your name will be honoured. **R.**

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12, 15-17

Brothers and sisters:

God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people.

So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient.

Let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts.

And be grateful.

Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives,
while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other.

With thankful hearts,

sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus,
as you give thanks to God the Father because of him.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 27:55

Alleluia, alleluia.

Many women were there by the cross, watching
from a distance,
the same women who had followed Jesus and
looked after him.

Alleluia.





Gospel: Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Don’t worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear.

Isn’t life more than food or clothing?

Look at the birds in the sky!

They don’t plant or harvest.

They don’t even store grain in barns.

Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them.

Aren’t you worth more than birds?

“Can worry make you live longer?

Why worry about clothes?

Look how the wild flowers grow.

They don’t work hard to make their clothes.

But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth

was not as well clothed as one of them.

God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields,
even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow.

He will surely do even more for you!

Why do you have such little faith?

“Don’t worry and ask yourselves,

‘Will we have anything to eat?

Will we have anything to drink?

Will we have clothes to wear?’

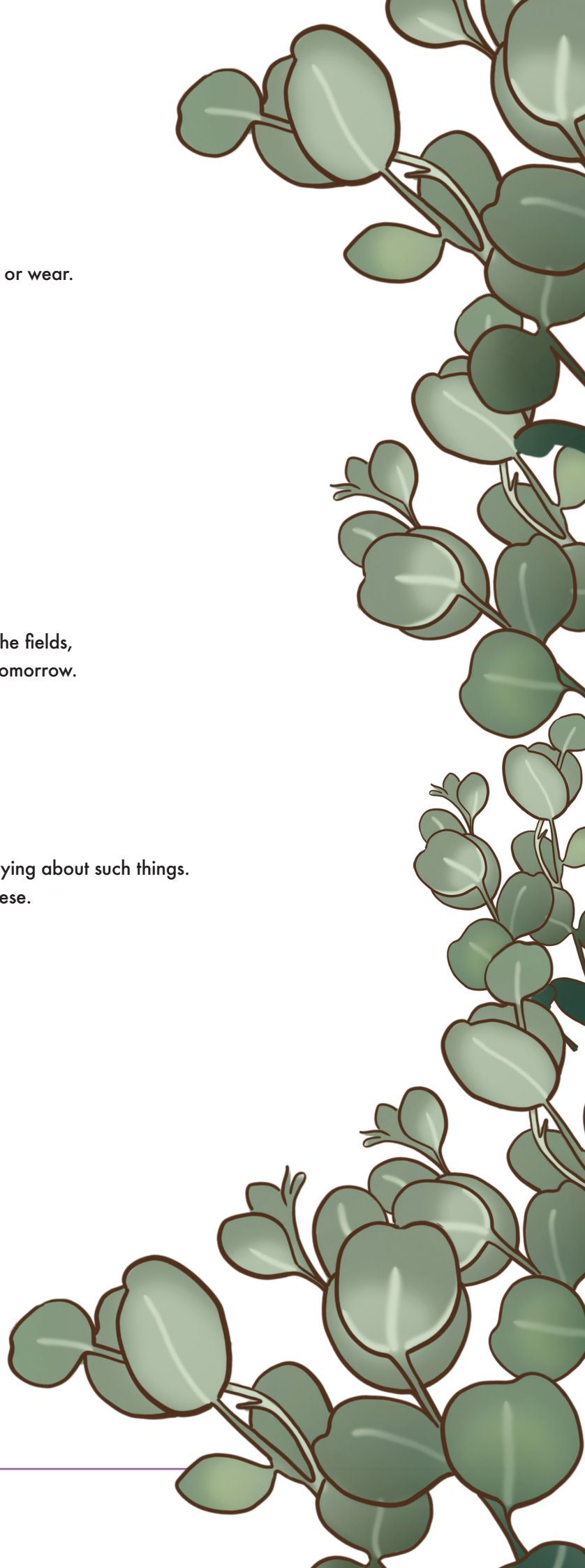
Only people who don’t know God are always worrying about such things.

Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these.

But more than anything else,

put God’s work first and do what he wants.

Then all the other things will be yours as well.”



HYMNS FOR CHILDREN

St Mary MacKillop – Hymns, Mantras and Songs by Monica Brown

Too Deep For Words – Adult, Youth and Children’s Version

Your God Is There – Adult, Youth and Children’s Version

St Mary MacKillop We Sing Praise – Children’s Version

True Colours by Michael Mangan

Radiating Hope

Free The World

Justice and Freedom

Setting Hearts on Fire by Michael Mangan

Make a Little Difference

Lord Teach Me Your Ways by John Burland

Mother Mary of the Cross

Some YouTubes

If you past the following into your browser you will find YouTubes about Mary MacKillop for eample:

Miss Marina’s Story Corner: The Story of St Mary of the Cross Mackillop

The Life of Mary MacKillop

The Story of Mary MacKillop



PRAYER RESOURCES

Click on the following link
(or copy and paste into your browser)
[Feast Day Resources - Mary MacKillop Place](#)

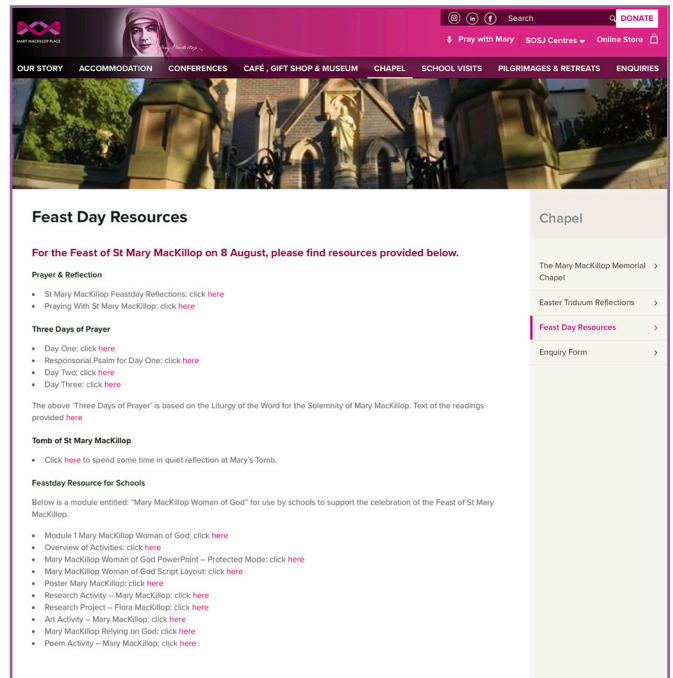
Here you will find:

Prayer and Reflection

- † St Mary MacKillop Feast Day Reflections
- † Praying with St Mary MacKillop

Three Days of Prayer

- † Reflections on the Readings of the Solemnity



The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with options like 'OUR STORY', 'ACCOMMODATION', 'CONFERENCES', 'CAFÉ, GIFT SHOP & MUSEUM', 'CHAPEL', 'SCHOOL VISITS', 'PILGRIMAGES & RETREATS', and 'ENQUIRIES'. The main content area is titled 'Feast Day Resources' and includes sections for 'Prayer & Reflection', 'Three Days of Prayer', 'Tomb of St Mary MacKillop', and 'Feastday Resource for Schools'. A sidebar on the right contains a 'Chapel' section with links to 'The Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel', 'Easter Triduum Reflections', 'Feast Day Resources', and an 'Enquiry Form'.

POPE FRANCIS

General Audience

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 28 June 2023

[\[Multimedia\]](#)



The screenshot displays the 'ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS' page for June 28, 2023. It features a 'General Audience' section with the location 'Saint Peter's Square at 9:00' and a list of languages. The main text includes the theme 'Catechesis. The passion for evangelization: the apostolic zeal of the believer.' and the witness '17. Witnesses: Saint Mary MacKillop'. A 'Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!' message follows, along with a paragraph of catechesis. A 'More...' link is provided. Below the text is a video player showing Pope Francis shaking hands, with a 'Watch on YouTube' button. To the right, there is an 'External Link' section and a 'Photos' gallery.

Catechesis. The passion for evangelization: the apostolic zeal of the believer.

17. Witnesses: Saint Mary MacKillop

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today we must have a bit of patience, with this heat!
Thank you for coming, with this heat, with this sun.
Thank you very much for your visit!

In this series of catecheses on apostolic zeal, we are encountering some exemplary figures of men and women from all times and places, who have given their lives for the Gospel. Today we are going far away, to Oceania, a continent made up of many islands, large and small. Faith in Christ, which so many European emigrants brought to those lands, soon took root and bore abundant fruit (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 6). Among them was an extraordinary religious sister, Mary MacKillop (1842-1909), founder of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, who dedicated her life to the intellectual and religious formation of the poor in rural Australia.

Mary MacKillop was born near Melbourne to parents who emigrated to Australia from Scotland. As a young girl, she felt called by God to serve him and bear witness to him not only with words, but above all with a life transformed by God's presence (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 259). Like Mary Magdalene, who first encountered the risen Jesus and was sent by him to bring the proclamation to the disciples, Mary was convinced that she too was sent to spread the Good News and attract others to an encounter with the living God.

Wisely reading the signs of the times, she understood that for her, the best way to do so was through the education of the young, with the awareness that Catholic education is a form of evangelization. It is a great form of evangelization. In this way, if we can say that "each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel" (*Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exultate*, 19), then Mary MacKillop was especially so through the founding of schools.

An essential characteristic of her zeal for the Gospel was caring for the poor and marginalized. And this is very important: on the path to holiness, which is the Christian path, the poor and marginalized are the protagonists, and a person cannot advance in holiness if he or she is not dedicated to them too, in one way or another. They, who are in need of the Lord, bring the Lord's presence. I once read a phrase that struck me; it said: The [real] protagonist of history is the beggar. Beggars are the ones who draw attention to injustice, that is, to the great poverty in the world. Money is spent on manufacturing weapons, not on providing meals. And do not forget: there is no holiness if, in one way or another, there is no care for the poor, the needy, those who are somewhat on the margins of society. This care for the poor and the marginalized drove Mary to go where others would not or could not go. On 19 March 1866, the feast of Saint Joseph, she opened the first school in a small suburb of South Australia. It was followed by many others that she and her sisters founded in rural communities throughout Australia and New Zealand. They multiplied, because apostolic zeal is like that: it multiplies works.

Mary MacKillop was convinced that the purpose of education is the integral development of the person both as an individual and as a member of the community; and that this requires wisdom, patience and charity on the part of every teacher. Indeed, education does not consist in filling the head with ideas: no, not just this. What does education constitute? Accompanying and encouraging students on the path of human and spiritual growth, showing them how friendship with the Risen Jesus expands the heart and makes life more humane. Educating and helping them to think well: to listen carefully (the language of the heart) and to do good (the language of the hands). This vision is fully relevant today, when we feel the need for an “educational pact” capable of uniting families, schools and society as a whole.

Mary MacKillop’s zeal for spreading the Gospel among the poor also led her to undertake a number of other charitable works, starting with the “House of Providence”, which was opened in Adelaide to take in the elderly and abandoned children. Mary had great faith in God’s Providence: she was always confident that in any situation, God provides. But this did not spare her from the anxieties and difficulties arising from her apostolate, and Mary had good reason for this: she had to pay bills, negotiate with local bishops and priests, manage the schools and look after the professional and spiritual formation of her Sisters; and, later, she suffered health problems. Yet, through it all, she remained calm, patiently carrying the cross that is an integral part of the mission.

On one occasion, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Mary said to one of her Sisters: “My daughter, for many years I have learned to love the Cross”. She did not give up in times of trial and darkness, when her joy was dampened by opposition or rejection. Look at this: all the saints faced opposition, even within the Church. This is curious. And she faced it too. She remained convinced that even when the Lord gave her “the bread of adversity and the water of affliction” (Is 30:20), the Lord Himself would soon answer her cry and surround her with His grace. This is the secret of apostolic zeal: a continuous relationship with the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, may Saint Mary MacKillop’s missionary discipleship, her creative response to the needs of the Church of her time and her commitment to the integral formation of young people inspire all of us today, called to be a leaven of the Gospel in our rapidly changing societies. May her example and intercession support the daily work of parents, teachers, catechists and all educators, for the good of young people and for a more humane and hopeful future.





We suggest that you invite an Indigenous person who do a Welcome to Country. If this is not possible, we offer the following options for an Acknowledgment of Country.

Today, as we gather to celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop we pause to acknowledge the *(name of the traditional owners)* as the traditional owners of this land. We give thanks for their care of land, sea and water ways for thousands of years. We pledge to work together for reconciliation.

As we gather, I acknowledge that we are on country of the *(name of the traditional owners)* I pay respect to their tribal elders, I celebrate their continuing culture, and I acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.