



SAINT MARY MACKILLOP

The feast day for Australia's first saint falls on Sunday 8 August this year. Her trust in God's providence, combined with practicality and sheer hard work offers us inspiration in the midst of the difficulties we face in lockdown. Joan Healy rsj describes Mary's spirituality:

God's Spirit wove the threads of her circumstances into a spiritual fabric resilient enough for her tumultuous times and ours. It is a spirituality tough and tender, simple and practical, grounded and mystical. It led Mary to seek and serve God at the margins of Australian society, where poor people struggled in the remote outback and sordid slums of the rapidly growing cities.

Mary's greatest concern was for the marginalised in society. Her deep sense of care led her and the first Josephite sisters to set up places for older women, support young women recently released from prison and to set up orphanages for neglected children.

Perhaps her most enduring legacy is Catholic education which began by offering education for girls, the poor who were denied education and culturally displaced Aboriginal children. What began as training for the first

Josephite sisters as teachers at North Sydney, over the years expanded to include lay women and men. Australian Catholic University now has a large North Sydney campus adjacent to the original 19th century buildings.

SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH OF THE SACRED HEART

Mary MacKillop knew suffering and hardship in her family life and in her efforts to live out the mission to which she had been called. She chose to be known as Mary of the Cross Mackillop. In her time, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was particularly strong, and her sisters were and still are known as Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

Mary MacKillop believed that the Sacred Heart is a heart of unbounded love calling all of us, then and today, to follow Jesus' example of being with and supporting the needy and the neglected. Her discipleship was a mission of the heart.

MARY MACKILLOP'S STORY

You can find a number of videos that relate Mary's story and other resources at <https://www.sosj.org.au/our-story/saint-mary-mackillop/marys-story/>



MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE HEART

Mary MacKillop's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be an inspiration for missionary disciples in the twenty first century.

Mission begins in the heart of God with overflowing love into creation that reflects the beauty and being of God. As expressed in the prologue of John's Gospel, Jesus comes from the heart of God to lead God's mission of announcing God's reign. In John 17, the last words that Jesus says to his disciples is that he is returning to the heart of God: 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.' *Jn 17:21*

Jesus lived his life centred in the heart of God. His life embodied God's mercy, compassion and justice throughout his ministry. From this heart place he acted courageously in welcoming all to the table of life. As disciples of Jesus we are invited to continue this same mission.

Stephen Bevans SVD, at the 2015 Mission: One Heart Many Voices Conference proclaimed:

Mission is first of all God's mission, as God moves through the world as all-pervasive Spirit and in the concrete body and history of Jesus of Nazareth, calling all creation—but especially women and men—to communion with the Mystery at creation's heart. God's act of creation is God's first act of mission, and God has been active, flowing through creation with a life-giving, loving, challenging, redeeming, and healing embrace from the first nanosecond, through the presence and power of the Spirit. Jesus was anointed by that Spirit for his mission and ministry, and, as Resurrected Lord, has lavished that Spirit upon us. Since Pentecost—or perhaps even more precisely, since Antioch—we the church have continued Jesus' mission and ministry as God's Holy People, the Body of Christ, created continually by the Holy Spirit.

MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP IN LOCKDOWN

Blessing is a way of being spiritually present to others in prayer. It is a way of asking God to surround a particular person or situation with love, healing and peace.

Who Can Bless?

John O'Donohue in *Benedictus A Book of Blessings* says everyone! When you bless another, you first gather yourself; you reach below your surface mind and personality, down to the deeper source within you, namely the soul. Blessing is from soul to soul. And the key to who you are is your soul. (p 216)

Have no anxiety about anything, but everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts.

Philippians 4:6-7

BLESSING PRAYER

Begin by finding a comfortable and quiet place to pray a blessing prayer. You may like to have a lighted candle. Take time to slow your breathing and come to stillness. Let go of any tension in your neck and shoulders. Imagine that you are being held in God's loving hands. Rest and savour the quiet stillness.

Pause between each line of blessing.

1. Pray for yourself. Focus on the light and warmth of God's love as it surrounds you. Rest in that light and warmth.

Bless me God, with your love.
Bless me with your healing.
Bless me with your peace.

2. Pray for a friend. Bring them to mind as vividly as you can. Hold them in your heart and extend love and grace to them.

Bless, God, with your love.
Bless, with your healing.
Bless, with your peace.

3. Pray for someone you don't know well, an acquaintance you see occasionally. During lockdown, this might be supermarket staff, someone who makes your coffee ... Bring them to mind as vividly as you can. Hold them in your heart and extend love and grace to them.

Bless, God, with your love.
Bless, with your healing.
Bless, with your peace.

4. Pray for someone in your life whom you experience as difficult. Imagine them in God's loving hands and try to hold them gently in your heart. Acknowledge to God any anger or tension that may arise in you and release these feelings.

Bless, God, with your love.
Bless, with your love.
Bless, with your peace

5. Finally, extend the blessing further, to everyone around you, everyone in your community, everyone in lockdown, family and friends in other countries and whoever else comes into your heart and mind. Imagine that all are sustained in God's love.

Bless, God, with your love.
Bless, with your healing.
Bless, with your peace.