

CONVERSATIONS WITH MARY

THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE

On looking up the THESAURUS for Prudence I found the following synonyms:

Caution, discretion, circumspection, common sense, good judgement, forethought.

Mary MacKillop was no recluse and had many practical decisions to make, the effects of which extended to many people. She would have realised her responsibility to make prudent decisions, based on the knowledge she had. Examining the pros and cons were part of her daily decision making and this must have been a burden for her, as she understood exactly the meaning of authority and took great care to determine which Sister was better suited for a particular job based on her knowledge of each Sister.

Mary had known Fr Woods for many years and she knew the voice of authority represented the voice of God. Fr Woods did not think like that at all; he cherished his own ideas and refused to believe that a higher authority could interfere with the ideas of a founder. Mary was very wary of alleged mystical gifts and phenomena associated with two Sisters in Adelaide. In her prudence she always asked the question: **Did it interfere with school duties?** Especially if the Sister was in good health and the prime of life. She was not happy to be told that directives were being issued by the Blessed Virgin and relayed to Fr Woods by Srs Angela and Ignatius. Mary was very much aware that one had to distinguish between what comes from God and what comes from oneself, and several times warned Fr Woods about being prudent.

SO WHAT WAS MARY'S STRATEGY IN DECISION MAKING SO THAT PRUDENCE WAS OBSERVED?

Two elements were constant in her decision making: **PRAYER AND CONSULTATION**

To Sr Annette she wrote on 30th July 1900: "We must pray for direction from God in these things and not rush ahead too fast." What great advice!

When things were developing in Brisbane in 1879, Mary made a quick visit to Sydney to consult Archbishop Vaughan about what she should do. But she always made the decisions herself; they were hers, and hers to make. But she never let the rule override the needs of people.

During her time of excommunication, she prudently kept out of sight, telling no one where she was, staying with Protestants, never appeared in Church and barely ever in public. This she did even though she had been told by those known for their prudence, that the excommunication was invalid. She was mostly concerned for Bishop Sheil of whom she wrote: "I dearly loved and revered him as my Bishop" 22/5/1873 to Mons Kirby.

REFLECTION:

Spend a few moments reflecting past decisions and where prudence and consultation helped.

Was there a time you acted imprudently and suffered because of it?

Pray for the gift of being prudent in actions and speech.

INTERCESSIONS

1. *In my decisions to take a certain action R: **Holy Spirit, gift me with the virtue of prudence***
2. *In my response regarding the actions and words of others. R: **Holy Spirit, gift me with the virtue of prudence***
3. *For the leaders of our Church and country R: **Holy Spirit, gift them with the virtue of prudence.***
4. *For teachers, catechists and leaders in our parishes R: **Holy Spirit, gift them with the virtue of prudence.***
5. *For young people in their decisions when seeking a relationship R: **Holy Spirit, gift them with the virtue of prudence.***

PRAYER

Creator God, in your wisdom you created us.

By your providence you care for us.

Penetrate our inmost being with your holy light,

So that our way of life may be guided by your Holy Spirit

And be one of faithful service guided by prudence.

This we ask through Jesus, your Son. Amen

Resource: *Virtues of Mary MacKillop—Paul Gardner sj*

