



**The Feast of St Mary of the Cross
MacKillop
8th August**

As we come together on the feast of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, in the time of COVID-19, when life can appear bleak and full of crosses, we give thanks for our many blessings. We give thanks for our faith which sustains us in these difficult times. We give thanks for the many people who have gone before us who made enormous sacrifices to pass on their faith, a faith that teaches us to embrace our crosses and grow through them. Today, we give thanks for St Mary MacKillop.

Leader: Mary MacKillop experienced many crosses in her life; poverty, excommunication, ill-health and public ridicule. Like Mary, we too carry crosses on our life's journey.

Reflection: *What is your cross?*



Leader: Some carry 'the hurt' of their crosses throughout their life's journey. Some even become bitter about their 'bad luck'. While others bear suffering with incredible courage and calmness. Mary responded in both a practical manner and spiritually to her crosses. Mary's advice was **"Do what you can with the means at your disposal and leave the rest calmly to God."** Mary dealt with her crosses, as best she could, 'with the means at her disposal'. When her father did not provide for the family, Mary sought work. When Mary suffered a stroke she learnt to write with her left hand. When the Sisters of St Joseph's Rule was threatened she sought approval from the Vatican. But Mary MacKillop also had enormous faith. She was able to 'leave the rest calmly to God.' Mary knew that God is on our journey with us and that He is at work in our lives. He will never desert us. However, sometimes we simply do not understand HOW God is at work.

Reflection: *How do you carry your cross?*

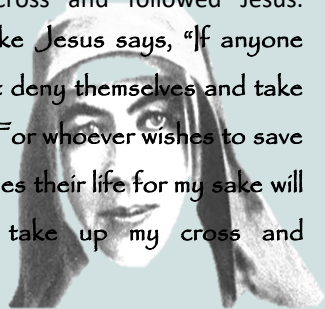


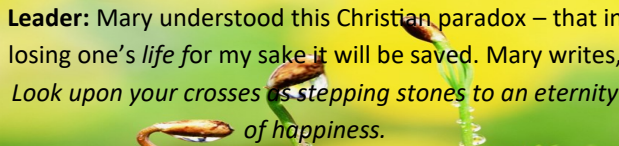
Leader: In 1991 Archbishop Little stated... *We [Christians] who ... identify ourselves with a crucified Lord are mad enough sometimes to try to follow the path of the Cross.*

Mary MacKillop not only experienced crosses in her life but sought 'to follow the path of the cross'. Mary's devotion was to the cross. On becoming a Sister of St Joseph Mary writes to her mother Flora, *My name in religion is Mary of the Cross. No name could be dearer to me, so I must endeavor, not to deserve it, for I cannot, but at least I must try not to disgrace it.* (Mary MacKillop to Mamma, 21 August 21, 1867)

Mary took up crosses for the betterment of others. She stood firm against the bishops whose mindsets were still in the Old World. She did this not so she could be proved right or for her own personal gain, but to help the poor, the weak and the marginalized in our society. Mary housed, clothed, fed and educated the poor. She visited prisoners and set up orphanages and refuges. She took up her cross and followed Jesus.

Reflection: In the Gospel of Luke Jesus says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will save it." Luke 9:10-14 Do I take up my cross and follow Jesus?





Leader: Mary understood this Christian paradox – that in losing one's *life for my sake* it will be saved. Mary writes, *Look upon your crosses as stepping stones to an eternity of happiness.*

Leader: Paradoxically crosses can become blessings. We learn and grow from our crosses. Imagine a life of no crosses- what sort of person might we be?

We actually grow and can be transformed by suffering, through our crosses. I have come to give you life, To have life to the full. John 10:10

As Christians, to achieve life to the full, to reach the fullness of our humanity, it is via the cross.

We are daily called into greater love via the cross.

We become a more complete human when we have carried our crosses well.

We are challenged as Christians.

We must look for the good, for the positive. For the hand of God.

For the signs of new life. Deeper life. Profound life. Richer life. The experience of the resurrection in our daily life.



Old Proverb: a smooth sea never made a skilled sailor!

MARY MACKILLOP HERITAGE CENTRE