

# Providence Lane

Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of 'Providence Lane', Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre's new newsletter. A name chosen to reflect not just where we are but as a nod to what we were. Mary MacKillop established us as a place of hospitality and care for people in need, a house of providence. As the audio in Mary's Room states "all people are welcome here as in Mary's time" and we hope our newsletter will reflect and share stories of that ongoing welcome.



The Camino group ready to take to the road (28/4/2021)

## OPENING OF THE NEW ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL, WERRIBEE

The Sisters of St. Joseph have had an association with the Werribee Parish for over 100 years, so it was with much delight that Betty O'Donnell rsj and Eileen White (Teacher (Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre - Education), were invited to the blessing and opening of St Joseph's Catholic School Werribee on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. School Principal, Shelley Ryan spoke of her gratitude for all the people who supported this new venture. A Paraliturgy preceded the Blessing of the building by Archbishop Comensoli.



Sr Betty presented with flowers from Principal Shelley Ryan

## SOME REFLECTIONS FROM THE AUSSIE CAMINO PILGRIMS FROM BALLARAT AND SURROUNDS VISIT THE MARY MACKILLOP HERITAGE CENTRE.

It was wonderful to be welcomed to the Centre and I was touched by Sister Patricia's talk and her devotion to both Mary MacKillop and St Joseph. She inspired me to want to know more about both saints and made me keen to walk the Aussie Camino. We were excited to discover that Mary MacKillop stayed two nights in Charlton on one of her Victorian train journeys. **Jo Russell Charlton Pilgrim**

From the moment I stepped inside the grounds of the Mary MacKillop Centre in East Melbourne, I could feel the serenity and a sense of holiness. The Centre is extremely well designed and enables a Pilgrim to truly feel immersed in St Mary's life, all her struggles and her amazing determination which culminated in her achieving so much, ultimately Sainthood. I would highly recommend a visit the Centre particularly in this Year of St Joseph to connect with St Mary and reflect on the great education many of us received from the Josephite Sisters. **Leonie Spencer**

## WORDS FROM OUR GUESTS

*Hi, I just wanted to pass on my thanks for a fantastic tour last week. To quote one of the volunteers - "I would like to thank you and those involved in the Program for such a lovely morning spent visiting the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre. I can't recall the name of the sister who was our guide but she was so pleased to share her knowledge and dedication to our small group of 4. We all enjoyed the tour very much."*

*Dear MMHC, I just wanted to write to you to say thank you again for your help in requesting prayers to cure my nephew of his cancer. We are so appreciative that the Sisters here and in Sydney have been able to join us in our urgent prayers for him. Today we have been given fresh hope, despite the doctors preparing us for the contrary, that he may still beat this disease. We can only believe that our prayers have been heard. Thank you again.*

*"Never see a need without doing something about it."*

- Mary MacKillop



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## A MEMORABLE TRIP TO THE MACKILLOP HERITAGE CENTRE

A visit to the MacKillop Heritage Centre is a trip back in time. Not only does one learn about one of the most remarkable women in Australia’s history but, if you were educated at a Josephite school, a spate of nostalgia is awaiting...

As I wheeled my 101 year old mother, Rita, around the various rooms, a loudspeaker above produced the unmistakable buzz from a classroom; the sound of children playing at lunch; school bells ringing; or Gregorian chants echoing in the background. Amongst the myriad of displays, we observed the daily routine of Sister Mary MacKillop’s teaching schedule; the slate writing tablets used by children like me in the 1960s; sticks of chalk; rosary beads (lots of these); and effigies of Josephite sisters in their brown attire. One wonders how the good nuns coped in Australia’s blistering summers, dressed in their brown flowing robes.

Sister Patricia (once known as Sr Jerome), the articulate and erudite nun, gave us an informative guided tour of the Centre where we learnt about how the Josephite sisters gave up their lives to educate the poor, the orphans and the destitute. It makes one reflect: Aren’t we fortunate to have such amazing women in our midst who give up their free time to make the world a better place.

We were fortunate to meet the director, Mr Ted Javernik, who proudly showed us the cornucopia of memorabilia on display. Ted spent time at the Broadmeadows and Surrey Hills orphanages as a child and now he is leading the Centre; it proves how the Josephite sisters continue to produce people of action.

Indeed, each person who visits the Centre must watch the five-minute video in the small ante room. It focuses on the great work the Josephite nuns do for Australian and Asian communities. By the way ... don’t miss the ending of the video - it is a highlight. A trip to the gift shop to buy a ‘hand’ cross is a must and, if you do not know much about Mary MacKillop’s life, do yourself a favour and purchase one of the dozen or so different books on display which reveal the adventures of this remarkable lady.

My tip to everyone in Victoria – if not Australia ... Make sure you visit the ‘**must see**’ Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre. It doesn’t matter what denomination you follow - or what you believe - the great work initiated by Mary MacKillop and her loyal, dedicated sisters is one to behold.

Lastly ... leave a donation with Kate, at reception at the end of your visit: we need to continue the great work of Australia’s first saint, Sister Mary MacKillop.

**Jerome Perth WA**



**In the photo (L-R): Kate, Margaret, Rita, Jerome & Ted**



**In the photo (L-R): Mary, Sr Patricia, Philomena, Mary**

## GUESTS FROM MALTA (VIA ALTONA NORTH) SHARE A CUPPA AT THE HERITAGE CENTRE.

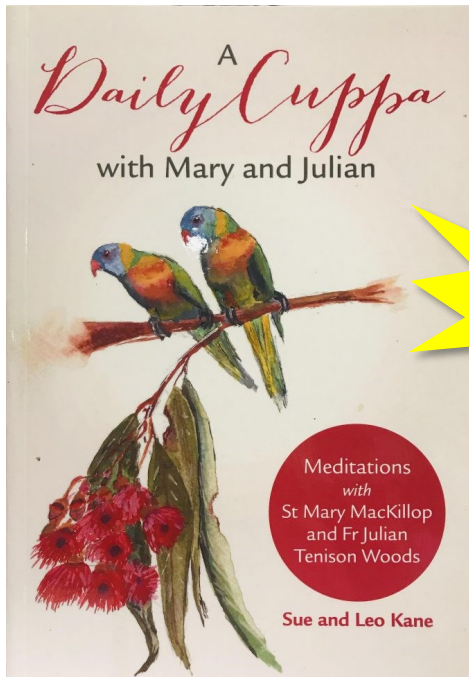
Recently the Heritage Centre welcomed three lovely ladies from St Leo’s Parish in Altona North. In chatting to them we found out that two met on a plane that was departing from Malta 60 years ago. During the conversation on the flight to Melbourne Australia Mary and Mary discovered much about each other, including that they were both pregnant! On arrival they kept a close friendship, living near each other and each having daughters in the same year. When their girls went off to secondary school in the early 1970s they attended Mount St. Joseph Girls’ College, Altona North, a school established by the Sisters of St Joseph. The photo shows them enjoying a cuppa with Sr Patricia while reminiscing about days past!

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## SPOTLIGHT ON THE GIFT SHOP



**\$25.00**

For all merchandise visit the MMHC Gift Shop,  
order by email [admin.mmhc@sosj.org.au](mailto:admin.mmhc@sosj.org.au)  
or telephone 03 9926 9300.

## REFLECTION - Conversations With Mary

### THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY—PART 2

Mary drew friends from all walks of life and different faiths. Mrs Joanna Barr-Smith became a dear friend and paid for the marble top of Mary's tomb. She and her husband helped the Sisters in many ways.

Dr Benson, a Presbyterian, gave his services to the Sisters free, and a fountain in Kensington attests to his generous care. When he died leaving a wife and young family, Mary made sure they were cared for. Two Jewish men, Messrs Solomon and Goldstein, generously supported the Sisters and their work. She had many friends among the titled men and women in Scotland and England. She was also drawn to those seen as criminals. Fagan, a prisoner due for execution, was befriended by her, to the point of requesting to be present when he was hanged. This was refused. Scotch Bella, an alcoholic, the underprivileged, prostitutes, ragged children were all drawn to her, recognising her love and compassion for them as children of God.

A story is told of a shopkeeper who had a picture of Mary in his window. When Sisters wanted to buy it, he explained how Mary had helped his family when down and out, to set up his business, explaining he was not a Catholic. He would NEVER sell it!

***Am I like Mary, willing to help all regardless of faith, culture, age, and circumstances?***

***Do I welcome newcomers, especially from another culture, to my Church?***

***Have I in any way helped refugees, asylum seekers and the homeless? If not in a practical way, do I pray for them?***

***Have I volunteered with a group that works for others—knitting, visiting, serving food etc etc***

***Do I know my neighbours?***

### TAKE SOME TIME TO REFLECT ON YOUR OWN LIFE

Mary looked to the motive beyond the action and unless she had strong evidence to the contrary she pre-sumed that people acted from good motives according to their lights. Yet she does feel the need to forgive some of the priests:

"...Our poor dear Sisters feel that they are in the hands of bitter enemies instead of those of loved pastors. The poor dear gentlemen, from my heart I forgive them everything, but grieve to think that I have seen what I have seen or heard what I have heard" To Fr Woods 14/10/71

In his book Walking the Way of Jesus, Bishop James Cuskelly writes: Of all those whose writings I have read, she is the only one who has written: I have through God's wise permission, at present enemies...but they are loved enemies.' Written during her time of excommunication.

### WHAT IS THE SOURCE AND STRENGTH OF HER ABILITY TO FORGIVE?

Reflection provided by Sr Mary Fermio

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR - Ted Javernik

After 40 continuous years working within Catholic education, I was privileged to be appointed the Director of the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre. I have an extensive and varied background in Catholic education. It includes having held a variety of leadership roles in Victoria and WA, positions as vice-principal and principal in Victoria and Tasmania, working in the Catholic Education Offices in the Melbourne archdiocese and the Sale diocese, and working with Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA). I have had many highlights in my professional career and hold many fond memories of working in schools. In 2017, I took a year away with my family's blessing to fulfil a long-held ambition to work with an indigenous community. I lived in the presbytery with the priests of the Society of the Divine Word in Alice Springs, and worked as a teacher of the Bridge Program, which was established for young people that would not attend school. A youth worker and I would coax our class cohort as best as we could to attend fundamental lessons in remote outdoor spaces, such as the dry bed of the Todd River! I immersed myself in the Catholic faith community and had a fulfilling busy program with the priests. We worked closely with the Arrernte people, going into homes, communities and settlements for prayer and mass. We ran a weekly pastoral program that involved attending prison each Tuesday night, delivering bread on a Wednesday night and attending the Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Unit on Sunday nights. On Sundays we would do the bus run and BBQs for the Aboriginal mass. I am blessed with a lovely wife Colleen, who is a maternal and child health nurse, a son Luke a Chartered Accountant in NY, and daughter Annie, a secondary school teacher at Star of the Sea. At a personal level, I chair the Mary MacKillop Today Victorian Committee and have been on the Committee for more than 15 years. I look forward to working collaboratively with the SOSJ to enhance the promotion of the spirit and charisma of Saint Mary, and the ongoing growth of the Heritage Centre. I have a love of the charisma of Mary MacKillop and desire to promote the vision and mission of Mother Mary through the MMHC in a more tangible way. The SOSJ have played a significant role in my personal growth and development, and my connection with the SOSJ is long and meaningful. I became well known while a resident at Surrey Hills, to be Sr Denis Cooney's 'shadow' holding onto her brown habit! With this close attachment, it didn't take much persuasion for her to induct me into the Essendon Football Club! I look forward to welcoming you to the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre.



### DID YOU KNOW?

At the age of sixteen Mary got work as an assistant and forewoman in Melbourne for the stationery firm, Sands and Kenny, now known as Sands and McDougall.



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