

Mary's News *today*



SPRING 2020

- Addressing Family Violence in Peru
- 10 Years On... Celebrating Sainthood
- Building Financial Independence and more...

MARY MACKILLOP
today



Dear Friends and Supporters

This edition of our newsletter is built around one of our guiding principles, 'Women at the Heart.' Inspired by a woman and led by the Sisters of Saint Joseph, women are central to our story and the communities we serve.

We've chosen to focus on this principle because, sadly, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate effect on women around the world.

We have selected stories to share with you that highlight the impact of our women's programs and women telling their own story – particularly as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Mary's canonisation.

I'm grateful to be part of an organisation working on sustainable solutions for the people most in need. This is only possible because of your support.

You're supporting women like Silvia, in Timor-Leste, who was able to achieve financial independence by setting up her own income-generating kiosk business (page 6).

You're helping to protect women in Peru from the risk of family violence, as we see alarming increases of incidents with crowded homes in lockdown (page 5).

And you're giving people right here in Australia opportunities towards financial freedom – especially those most vulnerable to economic hardship who are struggling to see a way to get ahead (this page).

Thank you for sticking by us during these tough times to make a difference for communities around the world!

With gratitude,

Jane Woolford
Chief Executive Officer

What does it mean to achieve financial freedom?

Financial struggles can cause all sorts of deeper problems in our lives – and it can feel impossible to ever break free. It is crucial to help people in need to stop the cycle of growing debt and take better control of their finances.

For many people, the impact of COVID-19 has brought financial hardship. Women have been among the groups particularly affected, as women are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty. Amongst the applications for financial support we received in 2019, 61% were women.

As part of our Financial Inclusion Program, we will soon be introducing Financial Literacy Workshops, driven by what it means to achieve financial freedom.

This will include helping people to:

- Gain control of their debt
- Actively save for the future
- Feel confident in managing their money
- Reduce financial stress
- Be prepared for the 'life' expenses that inevitably come up

With economic dignity in mind, we will help people to understand the options available to them in a safe and respectful environment. Improving skills in money management opens up lifechanging opportunities leading to enhanced financial wellbeing. This is especially



important for groups of people most vulnerable to economic hardship – such as women, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people living in rural communities.

Our hope is to free people from the distressing impacts of financial hardship.

Inspired by Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop Today empowers communities in Australia and overseas to realise their dignity through education, health, financial inclusion and livelihoods. All photos Mary MacKillop Today unless otherwise stated. When necessary, names have been changed for privacy. Front Cover: Delia is a member of ethica's Sempa Association weaving group in Peru



Mary MacKillop Today acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land, past, present, and emerging, on which our offices are located.



Mary MacKillop Today is fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. To maintain accreditation, Mary MacKillop Today's systems, policies and processes are rigorously reviewed by the Australian Government.



Mary MacKillop Today is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and complies with industry standards of good practice, transparency and accountability.



Mary MacKillop Today is a Registered Charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), the national regulator of charities.

10 years on... Celebrating Saint Mary MacKillop

This year is the 10-year anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Mary of the Cross, Australia's first Saint. At Mary MacKillop Today, we are reflecting on the qualities and actions that set Mary apart, and how her legacy continues to be relevant today.

Mary MacKillop was an ordinary woman with an extraordinary dream and a big heart.

Her dream was to give the poorest families and most neglected children access to education and safe shelter by opening schools. This dream became reality in 1866 when, together with Father Tenison Woods, Mary set up the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart (the Josephites).

broke through the prejudice of the early 19th century to educate all – regardless of gender, race, faith, or wealth – while ministering to the vulnerable with compassion.

She and the Sisters of St Joseph went wherever the need was greatest. They gave up everything to live and teach amongst the people they served.

Today, 10 years on from the recognition of Mary MacKillop's holy work, we continue to find hope in her values, character, and actions as a remarkably strong female leader.

Right now, in such uncertain and difficult times, we can look to Mary for what it means to persevere. She herself faced fierce opposition throughout her life from people who



be spoken of those who wronged her. She showed us how to be courageous in serving others and said, "Never see a need without doing something about it."

The dedication and determination of Mary and the Sisters helped significantly shape the access for all to education in Australia today.

Mary believed in the power of education to lift communities out of poverty, famously saying, "I'm a teacher, let's start today!" And like Mary, we here at Mary MacKillop Today still believe education is the key to improving the lives of vulnerable people, both here in Australia and overseas.

We see the growing legacy of Australia's first Saint written in the hearts and minds of people, not only in Australia but around the world. Mary MacKillop is a role model for all who believe in serving the most vulnerable and neglected.

Mary is indeed a woman for today! We can certainly learn a lot from her experiences for our own daily lives. Our prayer is that we always aspire to her values and emulate her spirit. As we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Mary's canonisation, let us all be reminded to take action and make a difference.

"I'm a teacher, let's start today!"

This was the first religious order to be founded by an Australian, and a woman at that.

As a passionate educator, Mary

sought to block her ministry.

In the face of trials, Mary persistently stood by her convictions – while also modelling forgiveness, insisting no ill

Courage Hour

16 October 2020, 8pm your local time

Join us for a global Vigil to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Mary's canonisation – an inspirational hour of deep peace, prayer and reflection on Mary's courage. You can host your own celebration or participate online.

For more details and to order your commemorative prayer book visit
marymackilloptoday.org.au/10-year-canonisation

Aussie schools raise funds for Mobile Kindy in Fiji

Schools all over Australia held fundraising activities during the month of August to celebrate Mary MacKillop's Feast Day and raise funds for the Mobile Kindy program in Fiji!

Why do we need Mobile Kindy?

In Fiji, people from remote islands often come to the city in search of work and end up living in informal 'squatter' settlements. In these communities, many young children go without access to quality education. The funds raised by school Feast Day activities will support the Mobile Kindy run by our local partner, Child Benefit. That means vulnerable children across three informal settlement communities in Fiji will have the chance for safe, quality Early Childhood Education.

How does Mobile Kindy work?

- The Mobile Kindy visits participating settlements 2-3 days each week
- Community-based volunteers are trained with the skills they need to teach basic early childhood classes for the children
- Children get to learn and play during interactive classes
- Parents come along to quarterly parent education sessions focusing on things like health and sanitation, child development, child protection and positive discipline

Who benefits from Mobile Kindy?

- Children have access to high quality early childhood education in their community



- Parents learn new skills and knowledge to support their children's learning and development
- Whole communities understand the importance of early education in building positive futures for children

We look forward to updating you soon on the success of all the wonderful school fundraising activities for Mobile Kindy in Fiji!

“Why I decided to include Mary MacKillop Today in my Will”

Meet Leonie, a long-time supporter.



Now aged in her eighties, Leonie shared how she came to support Mary MacKillop Today many years ago by witnessing the wonderful

work of her sister, Joan, who is a Sister of St Joseph.

“I remember my sister, Joan, telling me about the work of the Sisters of St Joseph. She told me stories about educating children in Peru and setting up an education program for children in Timor-Leste.

There are still so many people living in poverty. One of the things I like about Mary MacKillop Today is that they give people a way to get on their feet and live independently. I enjoy hearing about women in Peru who are being supported to learn how to make their own income...so they don't have to rely on handouts anymore to feed their families.

I decided to leave a gift to Mary

MacKillop Today in my Will because I know the money will go straight to the people who need it. For anyone thinking of doing this too, you'll be giving someone else a better chance in life.

After we're all gone, we can leave something to truly benefit the people still here trying to get by and needing to get out of poverty.”

We are so thankful for Leonie's generosity! After taking care of your loved ones, you might like to help vulnerable communities by contributing a gift in your Will, just like Leonie. For a confidential conversation, please contact Yvonne on 02 8912 2717 or via Yvonne.Hamilton@marymackilloptoday.org.au

Helping women affected by family violence in Peru

One of the greatest dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic for women has been the increased risk of family violence.

In Peru, the number of COVID-19 cases has skyrocketed, forcing communities into harsh lockdowns. Houses are crowded and children are not likely to return to school until 2021. And with widespread job losses, generating an income is increasingly difficult. Each day, stress levels rise for families.

With restricted movements across communities in Peru, it's getting harder to reach the women and children most at risk of family violence. Through our Enhancing Women's Civil Participation Project,

a joint initiative with our local partner CCAIJO, we're working hard to address this problem.

The generosity of people like you supports CCAIJO's special radio program called 'Kuska Llank'aspa' which means working together. The radio program is an effective way of sharing important messages around family violence during COVID-19 while people are stuck in their homes.

This program not only raises awareness, it also provides vital information to listeners on the resources available to deal with the effects of violence in the home. It's a way to support women in the darkest moments – so they don't feel



completely helpless and alone.

Your ongoing support will make sure vital initiatives like the 'Kuska Llank'aspa' radio program can continue keeping women and children in Peru safe from family violence.

This project receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Sister Cathy and Sister Angela

A much-loved member of the Mary MacKillop Today family, Sister Cathy Dean, has sadly passed away. She played a key part in the beginnings of our Fair-Trade social enterprise in Peru, ethica.

Sister Cathy's friend and another important person involved with communities in Peru, Sister Angela, kindly shared some memories with us: "Cathy was a ray of sunshine! Not

Remembering Sister Cathy Dean

long after she arrived in Peru in 2005, we made the bottom floor of our living quarters into a little workshop with a long table where women could come to learn knitting skills. Cathy and I would go to the markets to purchase the material, usually alpaca wool, and we'd bring it back for the women to take home for weaving. This is how our knitting group was formed.

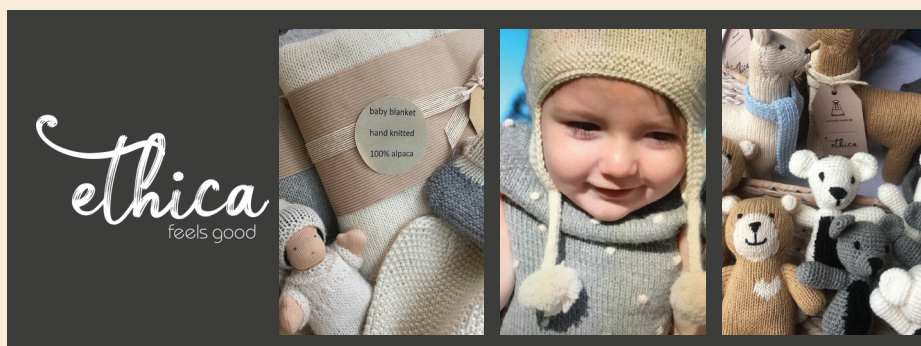
Cathy and I could then buy the lovely scarves, hats, and finger puppets, made by the women - and send them to Australia for people to purchase through ethica. It meant we were able to pay the women right away,

so they'd have money to buy food for their families.

We had about 80 women in the weaving group! It is now an official association called "Puka Phallcha" carried on by the women themselves and they are recognised as community leaders."

In remembering Sister Cathy Dean, we're so thankful for the hard work she and Sister Angela put into setting up livelihood opportunities for the women of Peru.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph founded ethica to create meaningful change for the artisans, their families, and their communities.



Support Artisans in Peru

This Christmas, give a gift with meaning!

Buy now to ensure your ethica gift can get to your loved ones – no matter where in the world they are.

ethica.org.au

“This journey is not just about me, it’s about my people.”

Meet Hayden, First Nations Scholarship recipient.

Hayden’s dream growing up was to become a lawyer, so he dedicated himself to many years of studying for his Bachelor of Law at university, while volunteering to gain relevant experience. He recently graduated with Honours!

“This journey is not just about me, it’s about my people. I grew up in Ballarat and my family are Wiradjuri from Cootamundra. It has always been important to me to do something where I can make a difference for Aboriginal people.

I’ve actually been inspired a lot by Mary MacKillop – for her tenacity to genuinely care for others without judgement.

Honestly, without the scholarship I wouldn’t have finished the degree. The scholarship meant I didn’t have to worry about finances while I studied.

My old laptop broke when I needed it most and the team at Mary MacKillop Today were able to fast-track scholarship funds for me, so I could get a new laptop right away and my studies weren’t disrupted.”

Since graduating, Hayden told us the wonderful news that he has been offered a position with Victorian Legal Aid through their Indigenous graduate lawyer program.

He has a powerful message to pass on:



“To the supporters making donations towards scholarships - you are a very good group of people contributing to closing the gap and the hurt. You deserve a pat on the back for helping us all move forward...”

And to fellow students studying – don’t give up! We need more Indigenous students to achieve self-determination. Education means we can make decisions for ourselves.”

Helping women in Timor-Leste build financial independence

Silvia and our Women’s Livelihoods Project

One of the greatest challenges that women face in Timor-Leste is achieving financial independence.

Silvia is a wonderful example of a success story with our Women’s Livelihoods Project in Timor-Leste – thanks to your generosity! Silvia lives with her husband and children in a rural village. With your help, Silvia has been able to set up a successful kiosk to generate income for her to support her family.

Silvia explained, **“I have been able to start a small kiosk selling vegetables and other things to support our family, paying our children’s school fees and buying uniforms.”**

As part of our Women’s Livelihoods Project, Silvia and other local mothers meet regularly for skills development workshops and business training in areas such as

design, production, marketing, financial management and leadership.

Silvia shared, “The Livelihoods Project has increased my knowledge in business areas, especially on how to provide daily schedule activities to manage my small kiosk. Mary MacKillop Today’s team has provided us with many activities, such as training on sewing and providing us with sewing equipment. They have also helped me with numeracy and literacy training and basic accounting, saving and loans training.”

Thanks to your support, Silvia has been able to earn income for her family. Like other women in her Livelihoods group, she is building her skills and confidence to participate more fully in the economic, social, and political life of her community.



STAY CONNECTED

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