

ENCOUNTERING
St Mary MacKillop
IN PRAYER



*Flourish with
Mary's heart*

A COMMEMORATIVE PRAYER BOOK

Thank you for joining us in the powerful gift of prayer

As we move through each of the prayers prepared by the Sisters of Saint Joseph in this booklet, I hope you will be inspired by Saint Mary MacKillop — an ordinary woman with an extraordinary dream and a courageous heart.

Mary's dream was to give families and children facing marginalisation, poverty and disadvantage, access to education and safe shelter by opening schools.

As a passionate educator, Mary 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 Saint Joseph went wherever the need was greatest.

Let us be led in solidarity by Mary to 'do the extraordinary' by supporting our brothers and sisters in great need to flourish.

Jane Woolford

Chief Executive Officer,
Mary MacKillop Today



Student enjoying the Mobile
Learning Centre, Timor-Leste

An invitation to reflect

The prayers and reflections in this booklet offer an opportunity to share in Scripture and understand the values that are key to the heart of Saint Mary of the Cross — a woman of hospitality, compassion, courage, mission, forgiveness, openness, and trust.

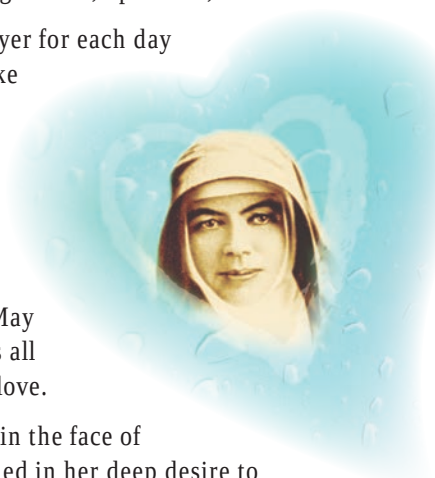
With a dedicated prayer for each day of the week, let us take moments of quiet pause to pray to our loving God through Mary's intercession for the longings of our hearts and the needs of our world. May her holiness ignite us all with faith, hope and love.

Mary's perseverance in the face of adversity was grounded in her deep desire to live in and for the Gospel. She answered God's call and went where she was needed most — no matter how challenging it was.

May you be blessed by our Lord in the inspiring presence of Mary MacKillop.

Sr Monica Cavanagh rsj

Congregational Leader



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman held in the hospitable heart of God

Make your home in me as I make mine in you.

John 15:4

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

God's love is too deep for words to express. 1870

Reflection

Mary MacKillop was a big hearted woman full of compassion and love. She felt and experienced the abundance of God's love for her. In times of trial and tribulation she found refuge in the hospitable heart of God's love.

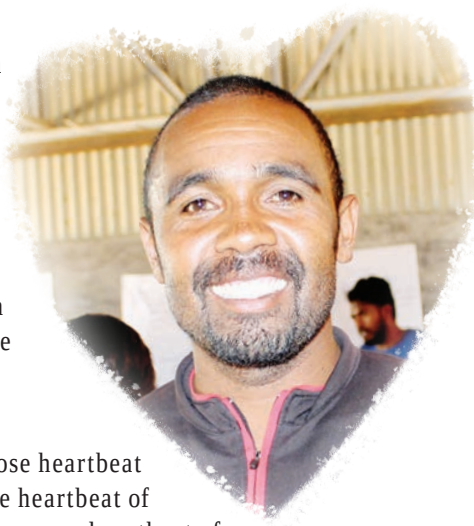
She was a woman whose heartbeat was in unison with the heartbeat of God. In her life she became a heartbeat of God for our wounded world.

From the life of Mary MacKillop

I can only say that Mother Mary had the biggest and most generous heart full of charity for all.

(Sr Brendan Casey)

Next to the love of God in the heart of Mother Mary was the love of her Sisters and the children – especially the poor children. (Sr Mary Joseph Demuth)



"When storms rage, when persecutions or dangers threaten, I quietly creep into the deep abyss of the Sacred Heart; and securely sheltered there, my soul is in peace" 1907

Pause for reflection

In what ways has God shown love to me in my life?

Prayer

God of hospitality open our hearts to the abundance of your love.

May we, like Mary MacKillop, trust in your loving care for us in all the situations of our lives. May we share this love in our wounded world.

Saint Mary of the Cross, open to God's presence, pray for us.

Action

Take time today to sit in the presence of God's love.



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman with a heart for mission

The spirit of God has been given to me, for God has anointed me and sent me to bring good news to the poor. Luke 4:18

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

Seek first the poorest and most neglected parts of God's vineyard. 1900

Reflection

Mary MacKillop was devoted to the service of the most vulnerable and in need. Her love for children knew no bounds. She established a Catholic school system for children who were isolated and in poor circumstances. She had a practical love for those who were experiencing hardship and destitution – setting up orphanages, refuges for the sick and elderly, and visiting those who were in prison. She welcomed those experiencing difficult situations and provided opportunities for those who were most vulnerable in the society of her time.



From the life of Mary MacKillop

Mary MacKillop had driven some miles in a snowstorm, but her first wish was to visit the school. There was a poor little bare-footed and ragged boy standing in the class. Mary went straight to him, and putting her arms around him kissed him saying, “Ah Sister, these are the children I love.”

Pause for reflection

In what way is God calling me to bring good news to those most in need?

Prayer

God of love, your heart reaches out to those who are experiencing poverty in our world. Open our eyes and ears to hear the cries of your people bound down by the injustices of this world.

May we, like Mary MacKillop, respond in word and action to the struggling peoples of our world.

Saint Mary of the Cross, serving the neglected ones, pray for us.

Action

Today reach out to someone in your neighbourhood who is in need.

Women make a fair living that helps their children go to school in Timor-Leste



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman with an open heart

Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay in your house today. Luke 19:6

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

Make no reserves with God. Reject no-one. You never know what grace can do. 1871



Reflection

Mary MacKillop brought the message of human dignity to all whom she encountered. She held in reverence each person, even those who had caused her great pain.

Sister Mechtilde recalls how *“if anyone came to her in trouble and distress, she would encourage and help them and draw the good that was in them out.”* Stories abound of how people responded to her presence.

From the life of Mary MacKillop

Mother Mary taught by her example:

“I remember how once an eccentric old gentleman was to be tended – being unable to care for himself. Mother instructed the Sisters to brush and comb his hair and long beard. Oh, our repugnance. And seeing it Mother herself lovingly and gently did it all and then took him elsewhere for further attention leaving us humbled and ashamed.” (Sr Anne Joseph Waters)

Pause for reflection

With whom is God inviting me to keep an open heart?

Prayer

God of tenderness you call all to share in your Trinity of love.

May we, like Mary MacKillop open our hearts to all whom we encounter this day.

Saint Mary of the Cross defending human dignity, pray for us.

Action

Be open to the stranger who comes into your life today.



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman with a courageous heart

If you want to be a follower of mine take up your cross and follow me. Luke 9:23

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

Have courage no matter what your crosses are. 1890

Reflection

Mary MacKillop was a woman of faith who lived by the power of the Cross. She truly understood the everyday life of people, their struggles and their joys. When it came to suffering and hardship Mary MacKillop had more than her fair share. She endured many tragic deaths in her family, including the fatal drowning of her mother, she suffered a life-long battle with ill-health, and experienced difficulties both within and beyond the Church. Her excommunication was a very painful moment in her life as was the Commission of Enquiry during 1883 which led to Mary having to leave her much loved Adelaide. She wrote at this time: *“The Institute is going through a severe trial but with humility, charity and truth on the part of its members all will be well.”* 1883

From the life of Mary MacKillop

On the news of her mother's tragic death, Mary MacKillop wrote to her brother, Donald, who was in England: *“You must have heard of our sad terrible loss. Everything was too bewildering at first, then the efforts to recover her dear remains, the funeral, and then came the reaction. It was sad, very sad that she must go as she did, but we must hope that her reward is great in proportion. I cannot now attempt to describe the dismay with which I heard the sad news.”* 1886

Pause for reflection

Think about the crosses in your life. How have they called forth courage in your life?

Prayer

God of life, you called Jesus from death to new life. When we experience the cross in our lives may we, like Mary MacKillop, respond with faith and courage trusting that out of our pain and suffering, you will call forth new life.

Saint Mary of the Cross, accepting of the cross in her life, pray for us.

Action

Hold in prayer today someone who is weighed down by the burdens of life.



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman with a forgiving heart

Treat others as you would like them to treat you. Luke 7:12

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

I entreat you, my dearly loved ones to forgive from your hearts. 1890

Reflection

Mary MacKillop was a woman who held no grudges although it was painful at times for her to hold in honour those who had harmed her.

She wrote to some of the Sisters who had spoken untruths about her: *"I excuse all and with a mother's heart I forgive. (And as I freely forgive and wish to forget, so do I entreat you my dearly loved ones, to) forgive from your heart any Sister who has pained you."* 1890

To the priest who had been the main cause of her excommunication she wrote: *"I forgive him; I forgive all who had any part in these matters."* 1871

From the life of Mary MacKillop

Mary MacKillop was teaching in Portland, Victoria.



One day the inspector arrived at the school. The headmaster Mr Cusack rearranged all the classes so that the students whom Mary and Annie had been teaching were in his room and his were in theirs. He took credit for the well taught pupils, while the Sisters were blamed for the poor showing of his. Mary's father heard of this injustice and went to see Mr Cusack. The outcome of this encounter was that both Mary and Annie lost their teaching positions. Years later when Mary was in Sydney she met a an intoxicated homeless person whom she recognised as her former headmaster Mr Cusack. She sold her watch so that she could provide him with clothes and care.

Pause for reflection

Who are the people in my life that God is inviting me to forgive at this time?

Prayer

God of mercy, you are always ready to forgive me when we fail you and those we love.

Like Mary MacKillop may we have a heart ready to forgive so that we may know your healing presence in our lives.

Saint Mary of the Cross, forgiving all who hurt you, pray for us.

Action

Hold in your heart before God someone whom you need to forgive. Allow God to speak to your hurt.



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman with a heart full of trust

Do not worry. God knows what you need.

Matthew 6:31-32

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

When I could not see my way God kept my heart full of trust to make all come right. 1883



Reflection

Mary MacKillop was a woman who had great trust in God, believing that God would provide whatever was needed in all aspects of her life, be it food for the orphanages, money for the building of a convent, strength to face opposition and false accusation or a way through a difficult situation. She often reminded her Sisters that “*God’s work does not depend on any of us.*” She had a wonderful confidence in God.

From the life of Mary MacKillop

During her travels in Europe while awaiting the approval of the Order’s Rule of Life, Fr Anderley suggested that Mary go to London, England. On the way she travelled by train. At Verona, Italy, she was seeking a place to sit. “*My dear Angel must have guided me for our good God found me a friend. In some way I happened to drop my rosary, and before I could stop to pick it up this person had done so. I was delighted when I discovered that he spoke English. When we arrived at the next station he carried my luggage to the Customs office and they let me pass politely.*”

Pause for reflection

What keeps my heart full of trust when I am facing difficult situations?

Prayer

Provident God, you provide for us in so many unexpected ways.

May we like Mary MacKillop place our trust in you when we face difficult situations.

Saint Mary of the Cross, trusting God’s loving care, pray for us.

Action

Place into God’s hands something that is troubling you at this time.



MARY MACKILLOP

A woman with a compassionate heart

***Being full of compassion Jesus stretched out
his hand and touched him.*** Mark 1:41

From the pen of Mary MacKillop

God will take care of us all. 1871

Reflection

Mary MacKillop had a heart big enough to enclose the troubles of all those who sought her assistance. No-one was excluded. She knew how to stand in the shoes of another.

Sr Annette recalls: *“She had the greatest compassion and love for the poor girls and the poor orphans.”* There was no wound that she did not reach out to. It was in the environment of her home life that the seeds of compassion were sown. Mary wrote to Monsignor Kirby: *“My home when I had one was a most unhappy one.”*

From the life of Mary MacKillop

Mary MacKillop loved to visit the orphanage at Kincumber, NSW. This sometimes meant that she

travelled by boat in stormy weather. On one occasion she travelled to Kincumber in a boat through a violent storm because a young boy had requested her presence as he lay dying. Mary stayed with him until he died and then led the funeral service because no priest was available.

Pause for reflection

Take a moment to recall a person who has shown you the compassionate face of God. Give thanks for this person.

Prayer

Compassionate God fill our hearts with love deep enough to walk in the shoes of those who have known hardship in their lives.

Like Mary MacKillop may we reach out to those who are struggling in our community.

Saint Mary of the Cross, serving with compassion, pray for us.

Action

Take time today to extend the hand of friendship to someone who is sick or experiencing loss in their lives or who are newcomers to our country.





About Mary MacKillop Today

At Mary MacKillop Today, we seek to fulfil the 150 year old ministry of Australia's most loved Saint.

We do whatever it takes to follow Mary's courageous legacy and her extraordinary 'can help' spirit.

Just as Mary helped where help was needed, Mary MacKillop Today set out to support the most marginalised children, women and communities here in Australia and overseas.

It means providing people with the skills and opportunities they need to flourish — even in the face of intergenerational poverty.

On behalf of our community of passionate supporters, we walk alongside people in need — all the way. No matter how hard it is.

We see the challenges and barriers and we do something about it now. Because it is *today* that those in need create a better tomorrow.

We are a growing force for change — today and every day. So, let's all take fresh courage and flourish!

Please lift up our ministry at [Mary MacKillop Today](https://www.marymackilloptoday.org.au) in your prayers.

We ask for God's provision and blessing, so we can continue working with the same faith and courage that Mary MacKillop showed throughout her life.

To find out more about Mary MacKillop Today, visit **www.marymackilloptoday.org.au**



Mary MacKillop Today in action

The generosity of our supporters reaches people in need all over Australia and internationally with empowering opportunities to realise their dignity.

Our international projects across Timor-Leste, Peru and Fiji include:

- **Giving children education opportunities** in the most remote areas by visiting schools, community halls and disability centres with creative learning tools.
- **Improving the skills of teachers in remote communities** because it is difficult to teach if they never received a quality education themselves.
- **Fighting preventable diseases in schools** by providing teachers with the knowledge and resources they need to share vital health information with their students.
- **Educating and mentoring parents in vulnerable communities** so they can play an active role in their children's learning at home.

Here in Australia, our work includes:

- **Helping to break the cycle of poverty by providing affordable financial services** as a 'hand-up' not a hand-out for regional Australians seeking fair credit and financial education to escape economic hardship.
- **Closing the gap on Indigenous education** through a First Nations Tertiary Scholarship program to break down financial barriers and help people pursue their dream of going to university.

Learn more about Mary MacKillop Today's projects here www.marymackilloptoday.org.au



About the Sisters of Saint Joseph

The Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart continue God's mission by immersing themselves in the midst of life to empower others and bring hope.

The Congregation was founded in Penola, South Australia in 1866 by Mary Helen MacKillop and Father Julian Edmund Tenison Woods. Mary and Julian encouraged the Sisters to share the lives and concerns of the people with whom they worked, drawing strength from the Gospel as they respond to today's needs.

Today, there are over 600 Sisters of Saint Joseph living in communities in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Ireland, Peru, Timor-Leste and Brazil.

The Sisters and their Affiliates serve in a variety of Ministries – educating and caring for people in cities and rural areas, among First Nations people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, in prisons and hospitals, aged care facilities, and family care centres. The Sisters are pastoral workers and advocates wherever there is a need.

To find out more about the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, visit **www.sosj.org.au**



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MARY MACKILLOP
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