

Be *Fierce* for *Fair*

MARY
MACKILLOP
today

Homily Notes - Saint Mary MacKillop's Feast Day

8th August - Faith that fights for fairness.

Today, as we gather to celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, we do not simply look back at a remarkable woman from Australia's past. We look at ourselves and ask whether we are willing to carry what she started.

Because Mary MacKillop is not finished.

She was born into a family that knew hardship. She grew up watching children go without education not because they lacked ability or desire, but because they lacked opportunity. And she decided, with the kind of fierce, practical love that the Gospel calls us all to, that this was not acceptable.

In 1866, she opened her first school in a converted stable in Penola, South Australia. It was not grand. It was not well-resourced. But it was there, for the children no one else was coming for. She and the Sisters of Saint Joseph kept going across Australia, into remote communities, through poverty and opposition. When her Bishop excommunicated her for speaking up, she kept going.

She understood that faith is not passive - it acts.

Her philosophy of never seeing a need without doing something about it, still cuts through today.



marymackilloptoday.org.au

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The need has not gone away, it has just changed it's location.

Here is what Mary would recognise if she were with us today.

In Timor-Leste, just one hour's flight from Australia, only 20% of preschool-aged children are enrolled in early education. One in five children with disability cannot access school at all. Around the world, 273 million children are currently out of school.

One of those children is a nine-year-old girl named Maria. She lives in a remote mountain village in Timor-Leste. She has a visual impairment. Every morning, she walks to school with her friend Aguida along narrow dirt paths, crossing rivers along the way. Her father, Silveiro, is a teacher and along with her classmates they help guide her through the day .

She says: "I cannot see, but I can learn just like my other friends."

That is the spirit of Mary MacKillop alive in a nine-year-old girl in 2026.

Through Mary MacKillop Today's Inclusive Early Education Project, Maria now has trained teachers, adapted learning materials, and a classroom where she can fully participate. She is in Year 3. That is what your support makes possible.

What we are called to do.

Mary MacKillop did not wait for someone else to make the world fair. She saw the gap between what was and what should be and she stepped into it, with courage and with love.

That is the invitation of this Feast Day. Not to admire her from a distance, but to follow her into that space.

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For some of us, that means speaking up when we see or hear injustice in our own community. For others, it means standing with communities much further away who are working hard to build futures for their children. For all of us, it means understanding that faith without action is not the faith Mary MacKillop lived.

This year's Feast Day campaign is called Fierce for Fair. It is not a slogan. It is a description of the woman we are honouring and a question directed at each of us.
An invitation to give.

Mary MacKillop Today carries this work forward in Australia, Timor-Leste, Fiji, and Peru. None of it is possible without the generosity of people who share her conviction that every child has a right to education, and that faith calls us to do something about it when that right is denied.
A gift to Mary MacKillop Today this August of any amount, can help train a teacher to support children with disability in their classroom. It can help provide the learning materials Maria and children like her need to fully participate in school.

\$25 can help provide locally written storybooks in Tetun. \$50 can help provide inclusive learning resources for a classroom. \$100 can help provide a mobility aid for a child living with visual disability. (direct to marymackilloptoday.org.au/donate)

Every gift is an act of solidarity. Every gift carries Mary's work forward.

In closing.

As we honour her memory today, let us remember what made her remarkable. It was not that she was without fear - it was that she acted anyway. It was not that the need was small but that she refused to look away.

She was fierce. She was fair.

Now it is our turn.

Faith that fights for fairness. #FierceForFair — marymackilloptoday.org.au

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Mary MacKillop Today continues the vision of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop and the Sisters of Saint Joseph, working alongside communities to create lasting change. If Mary MacKillop were living in our world today, she would not only be out serving those in need, she would be advocating fiercely against the injustices that deny children their right to education.



Notes for the celebrant

This homily runs approximately five to six minutes at a natural speaking pace. It is written to be read as notes and adapted in your own voice rather than delivered verbatim, the conversational register will land better spoken than read directly.

The dollar handle examples use conditional phrasing as required. If you prefer not to name specific dollar amounts from the pulpit, the paragraph beginning "A gift to Mary MacKillop Today" can be simplified to: "Whatever you are able to give, your generosity helps train teachers, provide learning materials, and ensure children like Maria are not left behind."

Maria's quote may be read aloud or displayed visually if your parish has audio-visual capacity, it tends to land powerfully in silence before the celebrant continues.