

Be ***Fierce*** for ***Fair***

5 Ways to Be a Social Justice Leader Inspired by Australia's first saint



MARY
MACKILLOP
today

**She was fierce.
She was fair.
Now it's your turn.**

You don't have to be a saint to fight for fairness.

BUT IT HELPS TO TAKE A LEAF FROM ONE.

Saint Mary MacKillop didn't have resources, authority, or anyone's permission. What she had was a clear-eyed refusal to walk past injustice. She saw a child without a classroom and built one. She saw a community abandoned and walked straight towards it. She saw a need and she did something about it.

Social justice leadership isn't a job title. It isn't a platform or a following or a seat at a powerful table. It is a decision, made again and again, to act on what you know to be fair.

Mary made that decision every day of her life. These are five ways you can too.



Maria, Aged 9

ONE

LEARN WHO GETS LEFT OUT AND WHY.

Social justice starts with curiosity. Before Mary MacKillop could fight for children's right to education, she first had to understand who the education system was failing and why. She went to the places others overlooked. She listened before she acted.

Today, 273 million children around the world are out of school. In Timor-Leste, just one hour's flight from Australia, only 20% of preschool-aged children are enrolled in early education. Children living with disability, and girls in particular, face the greatest barriers of all. These aren't statistics to scroll past. They are the starting point.

Try this: Choose one issue of education equity, locally or globally, and spend 20 minutes learning about it this week. Follow one organisation working on it. Read one first-person account from someone with lived experience.

"Do all you can to assist and love one another."
– Mary MacKillop, 1890

"Social justice starts with curiosity. Mary went to the places others overlooked. She listened before she acted."

TWO

USE YOUR VOICE, NOT JUST YOUR LIKES.

Sharing something on social media is a start, not a finish. But used well, your voice is genuinely powerful. Mary MacKillop understood this. She wrote letters, petitioned bishops, and refused to stay quiet when children were being failed. She was excommunicated for speaking up. She kept going anyway.

You don't need to be fearless. You need to be willing.

When you share a story about education inequity, name a specific injustice, or use your platform, however small, to amplify the voices of people working for change, you extend the reach of the conversation. You make it harder for people to look away.

Try this: Share the Fierce for Fair campaign this August with a personal message about why fairness in education matters to you. Use #FierceForFair and tag three people you think should know about it.

"I'm a teacher, let's start today!"
– Mary MacKillop, 1867

"You don't need to be fearless. You just need to be willing."

THREE

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR VALUES ARE.

Mary MacKillop built schools with almost nothing. She relied entirely on the generosity of people who believed education was worth fighting for. That relationship, between those who give and those who do the work on the ground, is what makes change possible.

A tax-deductible gift to Mary MacKillop Today this August can help train a teacher in Timor-Leste to support children with disability in their classroom. It can help provide learning materials for a child like Maria, nine years old, living with a visual impairment, walking across rivers every day to reach school, so she can fully participate in her education.

\$25 can help provide locally written storybooks in Tetun. \$80 can help support a teacher's professional development. Every amount is an act of solidarity.

Try this: Make a gift, any amount, before or on 8 August, the Feast Day of Saint Mary MacKillop. Give at marymackilloptoday.org.au/donate

"Let us show love in our acts." – Mary MacKillop, 1890

"The relationship between those who give and those who do the work on the ground is what makes change possible."

FOUR

STAND WITH COMMUNITIES, NOT JUST FOR THEM.

One of the most important things Mary MacKillop modelled was solidarity, not charity. She didn't help people from a distance. She moved into communities, lived alongside them, and let their needs shape her actions. She followed the lead of people who understood their own circumstances better than anyone.

Real social justice leadership looks the same today. It means listening before advising. Amplifying before speaking over. Asking "what do you need?" before deciding what to give. It means recognising that communities experiencing inequity are not problems to be solved, they are leaders of their own futures who deserve the right conditions to thrive.

Try this: Seek out one community-led organisation this month, in Australia or internationally, and engage with their content, their campaigns, or their community. Let their expertise inform your understanding.

"Let no obstacle deter you from proceeding with courage." – Mary MacKillop, 1907

"Solidarity is not charity. It is walking alongside and letting others lead."

FIVE

MAKE IT A HABIT, NOT A MOMENT.

Social justice leadership is not a campaign. It is a commitment. Mary MacKillop didn't fight for education equity for a season, she devoted her life to it, through excommunication, poverty, illness, and decades of being told she had overstepped. The Feast Day of 8 August is a moment to begin, or to renew. But the work continues on the 9th.

The most powerful thing you can do after today is stay in it. Follow the issue. Keep giving, even a small regular amount. Keep sharing. Keep showing up. Build relationships with people and organisations working for change. Let justice become part of how you move through the world, not just something you notice once a year.

Try this: Sign up to the Mary MacKillop Today newsletter to stay connected to the work, the stories, and the people behind the Fierce for Fair campaign, and to know how your support is making a difference year-round. Sign up at marymackilloptoday.org.au

*"Keep up your courage, we do not live here forever".
– Mary MacKillop, 1877*

"The Feast Day is a moment to begin, or to renew. The work continues on the 9th."

**She was fierce. She was fair.
Now it's your turn.**

Share this with someone who is ready to be fierce for fair.
#FierceForFair #MaryMacKillopToday

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marymackilloptoday.org.au
Feast Day: 8 August 2026

Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible. ABN 88 808 531 480

Mary MacKillop Today acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land and these waterways,
the Cammeraygal people of the Eora nation and their Elders past, present and emerging.