

FINDING INSPIRATION FROM SAINT MARY MACKILLOP
DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC
NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 8 AUGUST 2021



TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE FEAST DAY OF SAINT MARY MACKILLOP

As we gather online today, we celebrate the feast day of Saint Mary MacKillop. Let us pause for a moment and reflect on four of her special sayings and how they speak to us today.

1. *"Courage, courage, trust in God who helps in all things."*
2. *"Never see a need without doing something about it."*
3. *"Do all you can with the means at your disposal and calmly leave the rest to God."*
4. *"Let God's Spirit guide you in your choice."*

[pause, reflect and then pray each saying]

THE WRITTEN HOMILY | OFFERED FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK

The written homily today is longer. It is offered for reflection during the week in three parts.

1. We can pray and reflect on the reading from Colossians one day.
2. At another time during the day, or on another day, we can reflect on the Gospel of Matthew 6:25-34, and the quotes from Mary MacKillop before and after the Gospel.
3. We draw on Mary MacKillop's wisdom as we explore the harm done to the human family by the Infodemic during this COVID Pandemic. We ask for Mary's intercession and draw strength from her love of God and her call for people to be courageous.

Having received the Flu injection and both injections of a COVID Vaccine this year, I receive inspiration in Mary MacKillop's life, in facing the daily challenges at this time.

1. COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

Some minutes ago, we heard the Second Reading proclaimed by Margaret. It is one of the favourite Biblical readings for weddings, graduations, commissioning and adult faith gatherings.

It is a beautiful description of the Christian calling, of living our spirituality.

Mary MacKillop lived these words and encouraged others to follow.
May we use this sacred time to read from Colossians once more.

*'As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness,
humility, meekness, and patience.
Bear with one another and,
if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other;
just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in the one body.
And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;
teach and admonish one another in all wisdom;
and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms,
hymns, and spiritual songs to God.
And whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.'*

Let us now pause and share with God where we see our lives within the Reading.

[pause for a few minutes]

We conclude by giving thanks to God.

2. MARY MACKILLOP - 15/1/1842-8/8/1909

Mary, following the call of God, and discerning the needs of people, travelled into the unknown.

Growing up in Melbourne, Mary opened her first school at Penola in South Australia in 1866. Among the many schools that she founded, were *three* schools in Brisbane in 1870.

1. St Mary's School, South Brisbane;
2. St John the Baptist School, Petrie Terrace (not far from Suncorp Stadium today)
3. St Joseph's School, One Mile Swamp (Woollongabba) (later relocated to Kangaroo Point)

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 6:25-34

Let us recall this saying of Mary again.

"Do all you can with the means at your disposal and calmly leave the rest to God."

With so, so many challenges in her life, she lived out those words daily.

Let us focus on the words of Jesus that inspired her in today's Gospel passage.

*'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,
what you will eat or what you will drink,
or about your body, what you will wear.
Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*

*Look at the birds of the air;
they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*

*Are you not of more value than they?
And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?*

*And why do you worry about clothing?
Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you,
even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.*

*But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,
will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?*

*Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?”
or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?”
For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things;
and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

*But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.
‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.
Today’s trouble is enough for today.’*

Thinking of this passage, we recall some other insights of Mary.

- *‘Never be ashamed of work done for God and for God’s poor.’*
- *‘Be faithful in the least as well as the great.’*
- *We must take things quietly and just do what our good God enables us to do.*
- *We must teach more by example than by word.*
- *When I could not see my way God kept my heart full of trust to make all come right*

We celebrate this remarkable Australian woman of the 19th Century
and the first decade of the 20th Century,
as a saint who continues to inspire us in the 21st Century.

3. MARY MACKILLOP AND THE DANGER OF MISINFORMATION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Yet before she was canonized, there was a long process of investigation into her life –
a normal part of the canonization process.

The writings and actions of people who knew her, were examined in great detail, including

- her prayer and faith,
- her encounters with people,
- her spirituality as she faced so many challenges.
- and her deep loving relationship with God.

There was research into the people who supported her and her ideals,
and into people who had opposed her and people who were jealous of her.

There was research into the *truth* about her.

There was research into *misinformation* about her, and the reasons why.

There was research into *disinformation* about her, and the reasons why.

During the week, you are invited to watch five short presentations about her on the [Saint Mary MacKillop - Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(sosi.org.au\)](http://sosi.org.au) website.

The videos are:

[St Mary MacKillop's Story - Beginnings;](#)

[St Mary MacKillop's Story - Growth;](#)

[St Mary MacKillop's Story - Challenges;](#)

[St Mary MacKillop's Story - Fulfilment;](#)

[St Mary MacKillop's Story - Canonization](#)

Given the findings about Mary MacKillop's life journey and what she suffered, she is an inspiration for us today, as we face an *Infodemic* during the COVID *Pandemic*.

INFODEMIC? | WHAT IS TRUE & WHAT IS FALSE?

We all know that we are in a Pandemic. There is so much information about COVID-19.

What is true and what is false?

What is an Infodemic?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as an

"overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – that occurs during an epidemic."

The WHO says that it

"can lead to confusion and ultimately mistrust in governments and public health response."

The [Vaccine Misinformation Management Field Guide](#) was released in 2020 by PGP, FIRST DRAFT, Yale Institute for Global Health and UNICEF, and authored by Angus Thomson and Gary Finnegan.

'The guide should support practitioners working in immunization programs, including immunization managers, C4D communication for development specialists, behaviour and social change specialists, external and digital communications and health teams.'

The resource can help us as well, at work and in social conversations and online.

In it are helpful explanations about unverified information, definitions of misinformation and disinformation, and types of information disorder.

'Unverified information can cause harm by sowing confusion and drowning out accurate health information; it can change behaviour, including panic-buying or consumption of dangerous and unproven treatments; it can shape attitudes to vaccines.'

'Misinformation is false information that's shared by people who don't realise it is false and don't mean any harm, including vaccine proponents.'

'Disinformation is deliberately engineered and disseminated false information with malicious intent or to serve agendas.'

'First Draft, a non-profit that focuses on misinformation, has created a typology of seven types of information disorder: fabricated content, manipulated content, imposter content, false content, misleading content, false connection, and satire or parody.'

The Guide sets out a way to prepare, to listen, to understand and to engage. Brief case studies are provided about other infodemics during

- Polio in Pakistan
- Dengue in the Philippines
- HPV in Malawi

We are given advice about setting up basic social listening systems, and tips in making our message 'Stick'.

As we reflect on how Mary MacKillop suffered in her life's journey from what some people said about her at times, we turn to her during this [Pandemic](#) and during this [Infodemic](#).

PANDEMIC

With Mary's remarkable care for people in need during her life, and the healing miracles happening since she death, may we find inspiration in her to care for others.

INFODEMIC

To keep each other safe in our community, and in the wider human family in Australia and overseas, we need to advocate for the truth about the Pandemic and the courage to correct the misinformation and disinformation about the Vaccines. Denial and information disorder lead to more suffering and death.

PRAYERFUL INTERCESSION

We ask today, through the intercession of St Mary MacKillop, for God to strengthen our courage so that we support the telling of the truth about the Pandemic and to correct misinformation and disinformation about it.

As Mary herself said during her life:

'Let us all have courage.'

And *'Our courage needs to rise with difficulties and obstacles.'*

As we continue our celebration of the Eucharist, Saint Mary MacKillop shines a light on our relationship with God.

- *'God loves each one of one of us not withstanding our faults.'*
- *'God understands us better than we understand ourselves or each other.'*
- *'God wants us to take fresh courage.'*
- *'Lean more on God and less on ourselves.'*
- *'God's love is too deep for words to express.'*

And during the week ahead, may we echo Mary's words:
'A certain sense of God's wonderful love strengthens me.'
Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

readings: <https://bit.ly/StMaryoftheCrossMacKillop>

ST. MARY OF THE CROSS, MACKILLOP

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