

Mary MacKillop- Australia's first saint

Saint Mary MacKillop, also known as Mary of the Cross, holds a special place in the hearts of Australians as the country's first saint. Born in 1842 in Australia, she dedicated her life to serving those in need and nurturing education, especially for the poor and unprivileged. Mary co-founded the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, a religious congregation focused on providing education and care for the less fortunate. Her tireless efforts in establishing schools, orphanages, and welfare institutions throughout Australia earned her widespread admiration and respect. Mary MacKillop's unwavering commitment to social justice and her heartfelt spirituality continue to inspire people worldwide.

Mary MacKillop, also known as Mary of the Cross, holds a very important place in Australian history as the country's first saint. Born on January 15, 1842, in Fitzroy, Melbourne, Mary MacKillop's life was characterized by her unwavering dedication to serving others and promoting education, particularly for the underprivileged.

Growing up in a large Scottish immigrant family with eight children, Mary's childhood was marked by hardship and financial struggles. However, her family's strong and flowing faith and commitment to helping those in need left a lasting impression on her. At the age of 14, Mary started working as a clerk to support the family financially and then at the age of 18, Mary began working as a governess and teacher, it was during this time that she witnessed the appalling educational needs of the poor and put-down children.

While working as a governess, Mary met Father Tenison who was the head priest of the Penola appeal and together in 1866, Mary took a large step by co-founding the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, a religious congregation with a steadfast focus on providing education to underprivileged children around the world, especially in Australia and New Zealand. The congregation's approach to education

was revolutionary for its time, as it aimed to cater to all children, regardless of their background or social status.

Mary's tireless efforts in establishing schools, orphanages, and welfare institutions throughout Australia earned her widespread admiration and respect. Mary MacKillop's impact extended far beyond the shores of Australia. In 1873, she made a significant journey to Rome, along with her fellow Josephite Sisters, to seek Papal approval for their religious congregation. This journey was arduous and filled with uncertainty, as they faced financial struggles and opposition from some within the Church. However, their resilience and determination eventually led to the approval of the Sisters of St Joseph by Pope Pius IX, marking a pivotal moment in their mission to provide education and care for the underprivileged.

Mary also made trips to Scotland and Ireland where she sought support for the Sisters of St Joseph's mission and established schools and orphanages to expand their charitable work. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks, Mary's unwavering spirit and dedication to her cause shone through, leaving an indelible mark on the communities she touched. Her efforts in these countries contributed to the enduring legacy of the Sisters of St Joseph and their commitment to serving those in need.

In 1871, Mary MacKillop faced a significant setback when she was excommunicated by the local bishop, largely due to internal conflicts within the Catholic Church and allegations against her fellow co-founder. Despite this challenging period, Mary remained resolute in her mission to provide education and care for the less fortunate. And eight months after the ex-communication the bishop realised his mistake and brought Mary back into the church just before he died.

Mary MacKillop's health began to decline in her later years, and she endured several serious illnesses, including a major stroke that put her in a wheelchair. Despite her health setbacks, she continued her work with determination and resilience. Eventually, on August 8, 1909, at the age of 67, Mary MacKillop peacefully passed away in North Sydney. Her death marked the end of an extraordinary life dedicated to

serving others and advocating for the education and well-being of the underprivileged. Her tomb is now peacefully lying in North Sydney.

On October 17, 2010, Mary MacKillop was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI, becoming Australia's first saint. Her legacy lives on through the ongoing work of the Sisters of St Joseph and the countless lives she touched and transformed through her selfless dedication to education and social welfare.

Today, Mary MacKillop's impact is felt not only in Australia but worldwide, serving as a timeless example of the profound difference one can make through compassion, courage, and unwavering commitment to helping others.



Mary when she became a nun with her parents



Father Julian Tenison Woods



Mary MacKillop's Old house (not exact)



Mary MacKillop's grave plaque.



A monument made
in memory of sisters
Mary Mackillop



These are some of the
of St Joseph from Mary's
time