Mary MacKillop: St Mary of the Cross

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CURRICULUM POSSIBILITIES

Some big ideas: compassion, service, justice, community, Australian spirituality, integrity, identity, vision, following one’s dream.

Some big questions:

- How can Catholics live justly in our local and global community?
- Who are the poor and how might Catholics respond?

LEVEL 1

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Students are introduced to the story of Mary MacKillop. Using the website www.marymackillop.org.au, students explore early photographs depicting Mary’s life and work. Students investigate how Mary taught the children of poor families and helped children who had no one else to care for them by setting up orphanages so they had somewhere to live.

REASONING AND RESPONDING

Students are invited to wonder and generate questions about Mary MacKillop and her work of teaching and caring for young children. They are invited to express their feelings, ideas and wonderings about Mary’s story through art, drama and play.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL ENGAGEMENT

Students are invited to participate in a prayer celebration focused on Mary MacKillop – woman who loved the poor.

Possible exemplar unit: Following Jesus: Loving and Serving

LEVEL 2

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Students learn about Mary MacKillop as an ordinary woman who is part of the Australian Catholic Church. Using the website www.marymackillop.org.au, students explore stories, videos and photographs of her life. Students examine the evidence of her very practical love for the poor, and the legacy she has left for us in Australia today.
REASONING AND RESPONDING

Using Godly play, poetry, song, drama or visual art, students express their ideas and feelings about Mary.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL ENGAGEMENT

Students set up a prayer space with a cross and images of Mary as central symbols. They choose parts of her story for a reflection on her life.

Possible exemplar unit: *Alive in the Spirit ... Spirited People*

LEVEL 3

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Using the website [www.marymackillop.org.au](http://www.marymackillop.org.au) students gather information, images and stories to create a timeline of the significant events in Mary MacKillop’s life. Students explore Mary’s beliefs and values that led to her concern for the ‘underdog’ and the Australian ‘battler’. They interpret the legacy of Mary MacKillop in the work of the Sisters of St Joseph today.

REASONING AND RESPONDING

Students reflect on their own thinking and values in light of those of Mary MacKillop and the Josephites’ commitment to the ‘underdog’ and ‘battler’.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL ENGAGEMENT

Students take action around an area of need in their own context. They use symbols and texts from Mary MacKillop’s story to plan collaboratively a class prayer or liturgy.

Possible exemplar unit: *The Holy Spirit in our Lives*

Level 4

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Students explore how Mary MacKillop and Fr Julian Tenison Woods served the Australian community by providing education for the children of poor families. Students explore what Australia, particularly the Church in Australia, might have looked like in the time of Mary MacKillop. By examining Mary MacKillop’s life and work, students explore her particular contribution to the Church in Australia. They compare it to Australian life today and the ways the Church is part of Australian life now.
REASONING AND RESPONDING

Students reflect on the values and beliefs that shaped Mary MacKillop’s and Fr Woods’ dream to educate the poor and isolated children of Australia. They consider their own beliefs and values in light of this. They wonder and reflect on what it might mean to be a Catholic in today’s world.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL ENGAGEMENT

Students explore ways they can take the vision of Mary MacKillop into their own lives. They plan and engage in activities that build just local and global communities.

Possible exemplar unit: People of God in Australia

LEVEL 5

Year 7: Unit 5a Christian Ideals: Moral Decisions

In this unit, students assess the extent to which moral character has an impact on the process of making choices. Mary MacKillop held fast to her ideals and her vision for providing an education for the poorest young Australians even when that vision was in danger of being lost forever, following her excommunication.

Invite students to explore how Mary followed her dream, in collaboration with Fr Julian Tenison Woods, in establishing the Sisters of St Joseph, and how she remained faithful to her ideals in spite of intense opposition.

Invite students to explore the qualities of Mary’s character and her Christian ideals: compassion, determination, courage, and so on. How might her motto – ‘Never see a need without trying to do something about it’ – be lived out today by Year 7 students?

Students research the sayings of Mary MacKillop and prepare a prayer celebration focused around her faithfulness to her dream of working for and with the poorest Australians.

LEVEL 5

Year 8: Unit 5b Living the Christian Life

In this unit, students identify ways in which Christians live lives of discipleship in accordance with the ideals and values of Jesus. Mary MacKillop purposefully lived out Christian discipleship in early Australia. Explore with students what they already know
about Mary MacKillop. Students might refer to the website, www.marymackillop.org.au, to deepen their knowledge and understanding of her life, ideals and values.

Mary MacKillop was a woman of compassion. What evidence can students find to support this claim? How did Mary strive to transform the lives of individuals? Students could create a visual or musical response to these questions.

Students might explore the meaning of the word *providence*. Mary MacKillop chose poverty, and one of her values was to ‘trust in God’s Providence’. In the light of her time, was she being counter-cultural? Students design a chart comparing some sayings of Mary MacKillop with the message and values of Jesus in the Gospel. Might students identify Mary’s values as radical Christian values?

Discuss:

- How would Mary’s values be translated in today’s world?
- How might Mary MacKillop view the values of Year 8 students in Australia today?

Students prepare a class prayer service around Jesus’ Beatitudes and the sayings of Mary MacKillop.

**LEVEL 6**

**Year 9: Unit 2b  The Catholic Church in Australia**

In this unit, students investigate and research the contributions that people have made to the Catholic Church in Australia. Mary MacKillop, in collaboration with Fr Julian Tenison Woods, made a significant contribution to the Australian Church by establishing an education system that specifically catered to the poor and underprivileged in the early Australian colonies.

Students might explore:

- The isolation of children in rural Australia in the mid-19\(^{th}\) century
- Catholic religious expression in the mid-19\(^{th}\) century
- The Government’s stance on public funding for Catholic education in the mid-19\(^{th}\) century
- The vision for Catholic education that Mary MacKillop and Fr Julian Tenison Woods implemented.

Students might also explore whether there is a specifically ‘Australian’ spirituality. Might Mary MacKillop have tapped into it by her emphasis on caring for the ‘underdog’ and the
‘battler’? How might Mary’s venturing into the vast open spaces of rural Australia have influenced her spirituality?

Student Reflection: How would you feel if you had been Mary? Who are the ‘underdogs’ in Australia today? What would your response be?

Students prepare a prayer service celebrating Mary MacKillop in the light of Australian spirituality and imagery, e.g. colours of the Australian landscape, images of Australians responding to people in need.

**LEVEL 6**

**Year 10: Unit 5b  Working for Justice in Australia**

In this unit, students critique the value systems in contemporary Australian society, the reality of oppression, and the Christian call to work for justice in the world. The Sisters of St Joseph, established by Mary MacKillop and Fr Julian Tenison Woods are contemporary examples of individuals and groups working for justice in Australia.

Students might explore the work of the Sisters of St Joseph in Australia and beyond, and record the legacy of Mary MacKillop embodied in their work. Refer to the websites [www.marymackillop.org.au](http://www.marymackillop.org.au) and [www.sosj.org.au](http://www.sosj.org.au) for a deepening of knowledge and understanding regarding her legacy, which includes:

*Education in rural areas; caring for the aged; supporting families and women; partnering with Indigenous peoples; supporting spiritual growth; supporting fair trade; funding small life-changing projects; supporting those in grief and loss; speaking out and advocacy; parish and pastoral ministry.*

In small groups, students choose a contemporary song about injustice and examine the central message of the song and the relevance of this song to community injustices today.

Students prepare a prayer service celebrating Australia’s first saint, *Mary MacKillop – a woman dedicated to justice.*
Mary MacKillop Resources and References

WEBSITES:
- www.marymackillop.org.au (twitter and facebook can be found on this website)
- www.sosj.org.au
- www.marymackillopplace.org.au

DVDs:
- Mary MacKillop – Soul of a Sunburnt Country (75 min and also includes Short History of Mary MacKillop, 11 mins, and Testimonials, 2 min, what does Mary MacKillop mean to me)
- ‘Mary’ – a film by Kay Pavlo; Australian Film Corporation, 1994 (90 min)
- ‘That Very Troublesome Woman – The Dramatic Search for Mary MacKillop’ written by Dion Boehme and produced and directed by John Mabey – 60 minutes

EASY READING:
- Doyle, Bernadette; El-Hage, Lila and Walsh, Anne, The Story of Mary MacKillop John Garratt Publishing, 2010

SPIRITUALITY:
- Cuskey, EJ Mary MacKillop – A Spiritual Model for Australasia St Paul’s, 2010.
- Kane, Sue and Leo: The Little Brown Book – Mary MacKillop’s Spirituality in our everyday lives St Paul’s, 2009.
- Wicks, Pauline RSJ: God will take care of us all – A Spirituality of Mary MacKillop St Paul’s, 2009.

COLLECTIONS OF LETTERS:
- McCreanor, Sheila RSJ: Mary MacKillop on Mission to her last Breath – Correspondence about the Foundations of the Sisters of St Joseph in Aotearoa New Zealand and Mary’s Final Years 1881-1909, Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph, 2009.

TEACHER RESOURCES:
- Study Kit: A Glimpse into the life of Mary MacKillop – 4 Sessions
- Pamphlets: Praying from the Heart - a reflection for each day of the week.
- Discovering the Heart of Mary MacKillop (A3 fold leaflet with aspects of Mary’s life)
- Mary MacKillop – for the Church and for the World (brief story and prayer).

CHILDREN’S BOOKS:
- Goodwin, Joan RSJ, Mary MacKillop – A Great Australian Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph.
- Stevenson, Dorothy RSJ This is a Lovely Country – Stories about Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St Joseph in New Zealand, Catholic Publications Centre, Auckland 1994.
OTHER:

HISTORY COLLECTIONS:

ARTWORK:
Mary MacKillop Daily Calendar – a quote for each day of the year.
Catholic Adult Education Centre, Sydney: info@caec.com.au

MUSIC:
Fletcher, Mary MacKillop Legacy – CD.
Herry, Michael fms, Dare to Dream – ‘Woman for Today’ – CD.
Mangan, Michael Sing Your Joy – ‘Mary of the Cross’ – CD.
McCarrick, Therese and Barlow, Monica rsj Litany of Mary MacKillop, Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph, 2007.

WHERE TO GO:
Resources can be purchased through the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre
362 Albert Street
EAST MELBOURNE Vic 3000
Ph: 03 9926 9300; Fax: 03 9926 0330
Email: admin.mmnhc@sosj.org.au

Books on the life and spirituality of Mary MacKillop may also be ordered directly through Pauline Books and Media, John Garratt Publishing or the Central Catholic Bookshop in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.