

The Church in public life

This comment continues a recurring theme the prelate also stressed in the press conference at Vatican Radio immediately after the 17 October Canonisation ceremony: the importance of Christianity in public life. There he praised former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's public recognition of the importance of Christianity in modern Australian society, at the time of World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney. Mr Rudd, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, was one of four parliamentarians at the Canonisation in a bipartisan delegation representing the Australian government. The others were Coalition Deputy Leader Julie Bishop, Nationals Senate leader Barnaby Joyce and Labor's Senator Ursula Stephens. Their presence is recognition of "our (the Catholic Church's) part in the community", Cardinal Pell said.

He added that Christianity has been "one of the great rivers that has nourished Australian life almost from the beginning. It was women like Mary MacKillop and the great reforms of State education that started our national history moving."

The Cardinal noted that Mr Rudd led the government when the first full-time Australian Ambassador to the Holy See – former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer – was appointed. He said that Mr Rudd's



critical contribution to public life was that "he wasn't frightened to publicly acknowledge the contribution that Christianity has made and continues to make to Australian life."

Reflecting on Cardinal Pell's comments, Mr Rudd said that for "Australians, whatever their views of religion, it's important to acknowledge one simple fact – the central role that the Church has played positively in the history of our nation".

In his homily in the Mass of Thanksgiving, Cardinal Pell said, "From the earliest days of European settlement Christianity and its Catholic component has been one of the most important rivers watering and nourishing Australian life. In yesterday's Papal ceremony the universal Church put its seal on the outstanding Catholic contributor in Australian history. By its approval majority Australia now acknowledges that Godliness, Christian virtue and Catholic service have a well deserved place in the pantheon of Australian achievements."

St Mary's role

Earlier in his homily Cardinal Pell said that while education was not the only contribution St Mary made, it may be her greatest. After opening her first school in Penola, Mary was confronted with students who did not want to go to school and parents who were "not too disturbed by this". Quoting St Mary to help explain her life's work, he said that the Sisters, as St Joseph's true children, were to "seek first the poorest, most neglected parts of God's vineyard".

The Cardinal also said he hopes and prays that St Mary's arguably most famous exhortation – that the Sisters were "never (to) see an evil without trying to discover how they remedy it" – sinks into the subconscious of all young Australians. He said that her life and spirituality proved the power of Christ over whatever life throws at those who believe in him and seek to live according to his will.

"Mary's life was centred on God," the Cardinal said. "She realised that she was one of those 'chosen of God, the holy people whom he loves' and she wrote, 'I want with all my heart to be what God wants me to be', to do only God's will and never to stand in God's way. Whatever she did, she did in the name of the Lord Jesus and she set her heart first of all on God's kingdom and his saving justice. It was this faith which motivated her service and motivated the many women who joined her. 'Faith', she explained 'is the first essential if we are to cope' with life's difficulties."

Cardinal Pell went on to say that St Mary left us an example we could follow: "We thank God for the life, wisdom and contribution of St Mary of the Cross. We are grateful that she was not eccentric, not religiously exotic. We warm to her advice, are encouraged by her perseverance in sickness and adversity. Her faith and moral goodness are heroic, but not in a way which is off-putting or surreal. She does not deter us from struggling to follow her."

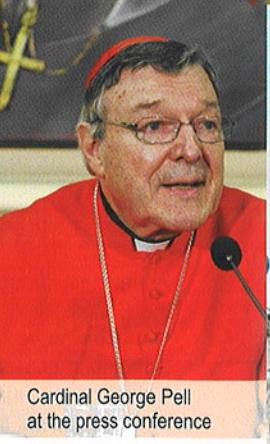
And he concluded, commenting on how St Mary is typically Australian, "This canonisation is an occasion for Catholic rejoicing and an occasion too for Australians to rejoice in a job well done. St Mary of the Cross is one of us, a child of the free and open society that Macquarie created, who made use of all the opportunities that such a society gives to bring God's love and help to others. Her voice is an Australian voice, the voice of a great woman all Australians can recognise as one of their own. But her example and teachings – about forgiveness, about resisting hardness of heart, and about working to overcome evil, refusing to be disheartened or defeated by it – speak to women and men well beyond our shores and in all ages. Australia is not a perfect place, but the blessings God has bestowed upon us have been blessings in abundance. Now he has raised up from among us St Mary of the Cross as our first saint. May we be blessed with many more to come and many more like her."

Questions for discussion

1. St Mary took the name "Mary of the Cross" and she welcomed the crosses life brought, which were many. How can we have this same attitude?
2. What are some of the features of St Mary's life and spirituality that you find especially attractive?
3. Pope Benedict mentioned the importance of teachers in passing on the faith. What are some ways we can all pass on the faith to others?
4. How do you think having an Australian canonised saint can help the Church in this country?

Anthony Barich is a journalist with the Perth Archdiocesan newspaper *The Record*.

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Cardinal George Pell
at the press conference

"She's a Saint!"

Australia's first canonised Saint
Mary of the Cross MacKillop

On 17 October 2010 thousands of Australians were in St Peter's Square for the Canonisation of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. **Anthony Barich**, a journalist from Perth's *The Record*, was there and he relates the memorable events.

Canonisation REPORT 17 OCTOBER 2010

The Canonisation of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop in St Peter's Square on October 17, 2010, was an unforgettable moment of grace for the over 8000 Australians in Rome for the event, and for the many more back home and around the world where the Josephite sisters are present. For the marginalised in Australia and for young Catholics struggling to live an authentic Christian life in a sometimes hostile, heavily secularised country, the event was also a concrete reminder of the power of God's love that can overcome all.

In the days before the Canonisation, Australians were in evidence all over the city, with Aboriginal pilgrims singing and playing traditional music on instruments like the didgeridoo in St Peter's Square. A van and personnel from the Australian Embassy were also a permanent presence on the Via della Conciliazione in the week before the Canonisation.

A highlight for many people on the day before the Canonisation was a concert on Mary MacKillop's life put on by students from the Australian Catholic University. The Australian Embassy and the Vatican Museum had also approached ACU to provide a seminar on traditional and contemporary indigenous culture and a cultural performance. These were held on October 15 to support an exhibition of indigenous art works held by the Vatican.

The Canonisation

Finally, the long-awaited day of the Canonisation dawned. From the early hours, pilgrims from all over the world made their way to St Peter's Square, which began to fill up hours before the start of the ceremony. A brief shower two hours before the Mass was not enough to dampen the enthusiasm of the pilgrims, and by the start of Mass the Square was bathed in bright sunshine.

Apart from Australia several other countries were represented in large numbers since Pope Benedict XVI canonised five other "Blesseds" in the same ceremony: Polish priest Stanislaw Soltys, Canadian Brother of the Congregation of the Holy Cross Andre Bessette, Daughters of Jesus foundress Candida Maria de Jesus Cipitria y Barriola from Spain, and Catechists of the Sacred Heart foundress Giulia Salzano and Order of St Clare member Battista Da Varano from Italy.

Australian representatives were seated in the front section of the Square, and pilgrims throughout the crowd waved Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, giving a colourful note to the festive occasion. A tapestry with the official portrait of Mary hung on the facade of St Peter's, along with those of the other five persons to be canonised.

The 140 Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart – the Congregation St Mary co-founded with Fr Julian Tenison Woods in Penola, South Australia in 1866 – were a visible presence in their teal scarves. Many were seated at the front while others were scattered throughout the large crowd, estimated by the Vatican at over 50,000.

Particularly thrilled to be taking part in the ceremony were altar servers from Oceania, including Angelo Spadavecchia, Paul Catchlove and Joseph Duke from Australia, and Antonio de Padua Martins Soares from East Timor.

As the crowd waited patiently for the ceremony to begin, Josephite Sisters Judith Sippel and Katrina Brill read some of St Mary's writings to the people gathered in the Square. A choir made up of Australian Catholic University students, some Sisters of St Joseph and other Australians sang verses from the hymn "If I Could Tell the Love of God". The choir members then joined the Vatican choir for the rest of the Mass.

Towards the beginning of the ceremony, a representative of each new saint went up to greet the Holy

Father and exchange a few words with him. For St Mary MacKillop this honour fell to Sr Maria Casey RSJ, the Postulator for the Cause. She knelt before the Pope, received an exchange of peace, and chatted briefly with him. Later at the Vatican Radio press conference, Sr Maria said that during their exchange, Pope Benedict said he remembered fondly his visit to Australia for World Youth Day and his visit to Mary MacKillop's tomb. "He said it was a great day for Australia and he sends his greeting to all of Australia on this very happy occasion and especially the Sisters."

Another Australian privileged to take part in the ceremony was Sr Anne Derwin RSJ, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of St Joseph, who read the first reading during the Mass.

The key moment that the 8000 Australian pilgrims in the Square and the whole country had awaited for so long came when Pope Benedict XVI pronounced the official formula of Canonisation, inscribing Mary's name in the Canon, or list, of the Saints and establishing throughout the Church that she be honoured devoutly among all the saints.

In another moment of the ceremony, a reliquary containing strands of Mary's hair encased in a carved wooden cross from Penola was carried forward by Mrs Kathleen Evans, the recipient of Mary's second miracle, accompanied by Ronald Campbell from Scotland, a relative of St Mary, and Sr Neisha Allport RSJ from St Joseph's School in Penola, where Mary's work began in 1866.

Faithful to God and to the Church

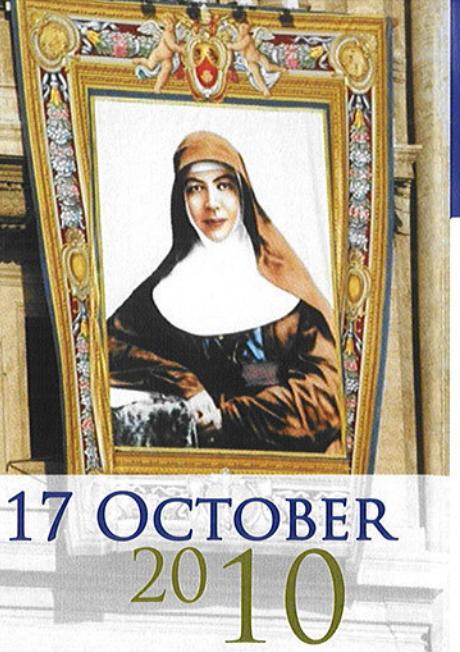
In his homily, delivered in all the languages represented by the new saints, Pope Benedict spoke on the theme of praying without ceasing, basing himself on the Gospel reading of the day. In English he spoke of Mary MacKillop's commitment to educating the poor and her devotion to God. "Remember who your teachers were – from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," he said. "For many years countless young people throughout Australia have been blessed with teachers who were inspired by the courageous and saintly example of zeal, perseverance and prayer of Mother Mary MacKillop. She dedicated herself as a young woman to the education of the poor in the difficult and demanding terrain of rural Australia, inspiring other women to join her in the first women's community of religious sisters of that country.

"She attended to the needs of each young person entrusted to her, without regard for station or wealth, providing both intellectual and spiritual formation. Despite many challenges, her prayers to St Joseph and her unflagging devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to whom she dedicated her new congregation, gave this holy woman the graces needed to remain faithful to God and to the Church. Through her intercession may her followers today continue to serve God and the Church with faith and humility."

Among those at the altar with the Holy Father were eight concelebrants representing Mary MacKillop: Cardinal George Pell (Sydney), Archbishop Philip Wilson (Adelaide), Archbishop Denis Hart (Melbourne), Archbishop John Bathersby (Brisbane), Archbishop Barry Hickey (Perth), Bishop Joseph Toal (Scotland), Bishop Denis Browne (New Zealand) and Fr Paul Gardiner SJ (former Postulator of the cause).

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Pope Benedict XVI, Canonisation Mass, October 2010



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Reflections on the Canonisation

Fr Federico Lombardi SJ, director of the Vatican Press Office, said after the Canonisation that it was touching to see so many Australians who had come so far for the event and who, "with their enthusiasm, showed a profound understanding for the meaning of this day, not only for the Catholic community but for the nation". Pilgrims, he said, always provide a very "peaceful and joyful" presence in the city, "especially Australians who have come from very far away; it gives us a sense of the universality of the Church".

He said it is clear that the Canonisation of St Mary of the Cross is a "powerful model of Christian life that is proposed to all, and is a very attractive model as she has done so many wonderful things for the poor and the young people, and everyone appreciates this." The Christian witness of her life dedicated to God announces the Christian faith to the nation, and in so doing is "a very good and inspiring reason to attract other people to the positive side of our faith," he told reporters after the Canonisation Mass.

Indeed, the Catholic Enquiry Centre later reported a huge surge in enquiries about the faith this year, especially in October, attributed mainly to the positive publicity generated by the Canonisation.

Following St Mary's motto "Never see a need without doing something about it", the Josephites, as the Sisters are known today, work in Australia, New Zealand, Peru, Ireland, Brazil, East Timor and in refugee camps in Uganda and Thailand.

In remote Australia, where Aboriginals on the fringes of Australian society are benefiting from the Sisters' love and education in their missions, many people are experiencing the saint's legacy in a unique way. The Canonisation was a powerful event for the 40 Aboriginals from around Australia whom the Josephites sponsored to attend the ceremony. One of them, Lisa Buxton of Sydney's Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office, said taking part in the historic event was a once in a lifetime opportunity for Australians who otherwise would never be able to go overseas, let alone witness such an historic occasion.

She said that approximately 660 indigenous Australians are enrolled in Catholic schools in the Sydney Archdiocese, and are thus involved in the legacy of Mary MacKillop, a pioneer of Catholic education in the country. "The young ones are so proud to express their culture with their Aboriginal elders in their connection to Mary MacKillop, as she was committed to education, and our children have been a part of that," Lisa said. As she spoke, two Aboriginal youths sang and played the didgeridoo in St Peter's Square.

Cardinal Pell told this reporter that the life of St Mary of the Cross, especially the way she bravely endured persecution and ill health, shows the country's youth that the love of God can overcome all, even



Fr Pierre El-Khoury waves Australian national flags as he waits to attend the Canonisation of Bl Mary MacKillop

in the worst of circumstances. "Our faith tells us that God is good; and that means that no matter what our difficulties are, or the terrible circumstances in which we find ourselves, ultimately the scales of justice will balance out in eternity."

"Our Creator God is good; and we also believe that he was so interested in us that he sent his son. One of Christ's most remarkable teachings was that you can use suffering and disappointment and even confronting evil and in some ways turn it to good. That's why the Cross – the Crucifix – is the symbol of our redemption. Mary MacKillop lived that. She herself said that she couldn't have got through the difficulties in her life – and she had more than her share – if she didn't have her faith."

The Mass of Thanksgiving

Apart from the Canonisation Mass itself, the big event for Australians was the Mass of Thanksgiving at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls on Monday, October 18. The Mass was concelebrated by 26 bishops and 222 priests, mostly Australian. It was estimated that there were more than 4000 people in the immense Basilica, one of the four Major Basilicas of Rome.

Many commented afterwards that while the Canonisation ceremony was shared with the other new saints from different countries, the Mass of Thanksgiving was distinctly Australian. It was celebrated in English with well-known hymns and it featured indigenous Australians in the offertory procession. At the same time, its setting in the historic Roman basilica made one feel part of the universal Church.

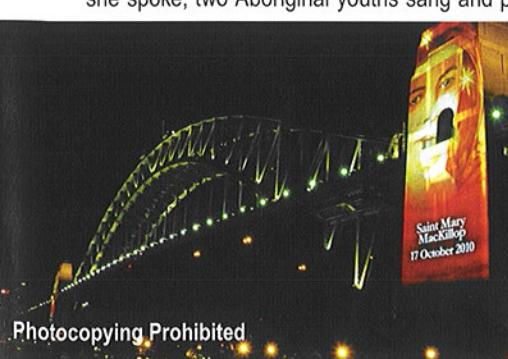
Cardinal Pell, who gave the homily, used the opportunity to remind the pilgrims that St Mary of the Cross MacKillop's Canonisation name is a warning not to play down the personal consequences of original sin and an inspiration to fight the pervasive spiritual anguish. "Today we find strange the name she chose for her religious profession, 'Mary of the Cross', which explains our preference for the title St Mary MacKillop," he said. "We like to think of ourselves as positive and affirming and one temptation today in our materially comfortable lives is to downplay the evil and spiritual anguish around us, to soft pedal the costs of redemption and ignore the flaws in our own hearts, the personal consequences of original sin. We are not born bad and depraved, but we are born selfish and imperfect. Nineteenth-century Catholicism understood all this better than we do."

He said that St Mary worked to give poor Catholic families the capacity to exploit their opportunities, to avail themselves of the consequences of the widespread Australian conviction, which Governor Lachlan Macquarie favoured, that everyone had a right to a "fair go". Macquarie laid the foundation stone of St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney in 1821, even though for most of the colony's first 30 years the public celebration of Mass had been forbidden. Even on becoming governor, Macquarie was obliged to swear on oath that he did not believe in the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation. It was only in 1829 that Irish statesman Daniel O'Connell achieved Catholic emancipation through the British parliament after a long campaign of peaceful mass protests.

Cardinal Pell said many of the original convicts brought to Australia were Irish Catholics, who were flogged if they did not attend the Protestant service on Sunday and had no freedom to practise their religion.



Sr Maria Casey greets Pope Benedict



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