A Protestant Reflection on St Mary of the Cross
by
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Mary MacKillop was born in Melbourne at a time when Australia was changing from being ‘an extensive gaol,’¹ into a British colony.² Her Scottish parents had been amongst more than two hundred thousand Protestant and Catholic settlers who migrated from Britain to Australia between 1831 and 1850 and this early diverse Australian colonial community, with its retained sectarian allegiances, was far from being well integrated. Religious affiliation provided a framework for self-identification of one group over and against the other and as a result, healthy communal relationships between these often narrowly focussed religious groups were inhibited severely. Sadly, the two things all the immigrants appear to have held in common were ‘an idealised picture of Christian womanhood’³ and an ignorant agreement about the subjugation of the Australian indigenous population they were in the process of displacing! From a twenty-first century evangelical Protestant perspective, Mary McKillop is to be praised for her ability to move beyond sectarian strife and align herself with the God she found present in the midst of all humanity.

Politics and Religion in 19th Century Australia
Colonial community structures in 19th century Australia reflected the social reality of the time where male leadership was assumed along with its hierarchical structures. The gender preference was understandable at a time when women were a distinct minority in Australia’s earliest convict, emancipist and immigrant communities.⁴ Yet it was a Protestant woman, Queen Victoria, who had the constitutional right to adjudicate on any political matter affecting the colony and, in addition, was free to wield religious power at home in Britain as well as abroad. At her coronation in 1838, the Archbishop of Canterbury had presented her with the traditional Orb and Cross saying, ‘Receive this Orb set under the Cross and remember that the whole world is subject to the
power and Empire of Christ our Redeemer. Unfortunately, the term ‘Empire’ was interpreted in such a way that many assumed the Kingdom of God and the British Empire to be one and the same. Consequently, political promulgations that used religious language were accepted as divinely authoritative ‘for the sake of public order.’ But the resulting socio-political order assumed the supremacy of one particular religious denomination, the Church of England, over any of the others that were functioning at the time. As a consequence, it reinforced a perception of English ethnic superiority amongst those who valued their Scottish, Welsh or Irish inheritance.

Not surprisingly, the majority of early Australian political leaders were identified as Anglicans and are reported to have rejected at least one offer of pastoral assistance from British Roman Catholics even though at the time a third of all convicts, emancipists and refugees were Catholics from Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. The Catholics were concerned about the potential for a ‘Protestant ascendancy to deprive Irish paupers of their faith,’ while the Protestants were suspicious that a Catholic deluge of immigrants taking advantage of the ‘bounty scheme’ might contaminate the benefits of their reformed tradition through ‘perverted and degraded . . . superstitious and idolatrous practices.’ As a result, many of the poorest members of society remained sceptical of the elitist and dominant religious systems, preferring to identify theologically with those who proclaimed a Christ who suffered alongside them rather than a Christ who judged them.

In this complex emerging nation, at the time of Mary MacKillop’s birth in 1842 and throughout her early childhood, the sectarian division was not just between Catholics and Protestants. Over the preceding two centuries in Britain and Europe a variety of new Christian religious expressions had emerged with histories of dissension and separation as well as inspiring moments of renewal. Amongst the range of congregations identifying as Protestant there was an
increasing attraction to the idea of congregational autonomy rather than episcopal hierarchy. Many of these new religious expressions found their way to colonial Australia and, as a result, the increasing wealth and status of the Anglicans in New South Wales was challenged by a coalition of Presbyterians, Methodists and Catholics with their combined aim ‘to destroy the Anglican monopoly.’ A further complication to any simplistic Catholic versus Protestant model occurred in 1848 when two Anglican priests in New South Wales ‘were received into the Roman Catholic Church’ challenging the assertion that ‘the Protestant was obsessed with the horrid nightmare that his high material standard and his personal liberty might be swept aside by an increase in Catholic power.’ However, in spite of these divisions, some inspirational early Australian Christians emerged who were able to respect differences in religious allegiance and to transcend religious politics for the benefit of all. They were often women, and their contributions were mostly focussed on child welfare and education.

Secular and Religious Education
The provision of appropriate education for all its citizens was essential for the long-term benefit of Australian society. But with few resources and little understanding of long-term colonial management, it is not surprising that the appointed Australian governing leadership in the 19th century made decisions on the delivery of education that would privilege the wealthy few rather than the mass of struggling poor. As one educational historian notes,

If you lived in the country in the 1800s, you might be lucky enough to have a small, one room school house on land donated by a local farmer. In the city, if you could not afford to attend one of the schools set up by the various churches, you would most probably be tutored by the wife of the local doctor, lawyer, magistrate or other professional. No standard for education existed. Education was only available to the wealthier middle and upper classes, who could afford to pay tuition.
In fact, the provision of education was one of the most provocative challenges at that time, with many questioning the reasons for preferring a church-based education program over a secular government controlled system. In the face of public concern, a Church and Schools Corporation was established in 1830, setting apart one seventh of crown land in Australia ‘for the maintenance and support of the clergy and the established Church of England . . . and the maintenance and support of schools and schoolmasters in connection with the established church.’ Furthermore, the Christian Bible was the only textbook planned for use in these earliest Australian schools.

It is not surprising, then, that a reaction from a strong bipartisan group of non-Anglican Protestants and Catholics resulted in the dissolution of this initiative after just three years. Then, a little over a decade later in the year before Mary’s birth, the issue of religious and secular control of education emerged again. A Tasmanian Anglican Bishop proposed ‘a Scriptural education to train up not moralists but God’s worshippers.’ This riled Alexander MacKillop, Mary’s well-educated fiery father, who was one of the most vociferous in addressing the issue of schooling availability. He was concerned that both Anglican influence and ‘secularised education was a blatant attempt to stamp out Catholicism and institute a “godless society”.’ As Manning Clark notes,

The Catholics branded the national schools as Protestant seminaries. Some Protestants were beguiled into accepting them as preferable to surrendering to ‘popish’ domination. In an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable both the denominational and national schools were starved of funds, and so the quality of both types of education paid the price of sectarian folly.

At the same time some seemingly non-religious ‘rationalists’ were an emerging influence encouraging the dissemination of
the scientific theories of Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley in educational institutions. Again it was an issue that brought Catholics and Protestants together in bipartisan protest. However, in South Australia, the place of Mary’s earliest vocational experiences, some unusually egalitarian views on religion were articulated along with an openness to wider understandings where there would be political recognition of equality between all religious groups and where ‘for the building of churches and the support of ministers the voluntary principle would provide.’

Mary MacKillop, an Ecumenical Educator
Mary MacKillop is described as having ‘a bright and enquiring mind’ but had minimal formal education herself. Along with her siblings, she was effectively home-schooled, largely by her father. She was fiercely defensive of her Catholic heritage, but it seems that she did not restrict her friendship groups to Catholics alone. Her acceptance of Protestants and support from Protestants is well documented in contemporary literature. The editor of The Victorian Review, H. Mortimer Franklyn, wrote an essay on the Sisters of St Joseph in the mid 1880’s noting that they are ‘warmly supported by Protestants . . . as well as those from their own creed.’ Mary was clearly a determined person who, having had first-hand experience of the need for the provision of welfare to her own family, developed a strong sense of social justice. She rejected firmly ‘the notion that people could be judged by their social status, race, religion, occupation or the size of their bank balances.’

At that time it was not unusual for teachers to have had no formal teacher training, mostly to the detriment of their students. But Mary was an example of what is known today as ‘experiential’ or ‘problem-based’ learning. Her innate intelligence, her reading capacity and her management competencies as well many other life experiences formed a woman with a vision for educating the poor children of the rural and urban communities of both Australia and New
Zealand. She engaged in multi-tasking from an early age. Initially, she travelled to South Australia as a teenager not just to support the learning of a cousin’s family, but also to provide income for the daily needs of her own family. A pattern then developed as she contributed to the early learning of familiar local people as well as to needy strangers she would encounter along the way. Later travels to other Australian states, to New Zealand and even to Rome indicate her secure independence and spiritual confidence.

It is likely that the Josephite schools focussed their learning curriculum on basic literacy and numeracy skills as well on learning the moral values and rituals of the Catholic church. The reading curriculum seems to have been based largely on teaching ‘the prayers and catechism,’ but like students in the government and Protestant schools of the time, the girls in Josephite schools probably engaged in ‘sewing, knitting and darning instruction’ for considerable periods of time each day. A letter written by Mary in 1895 to the Children of St Joseph’s School in Rangiora in New Zealand probably discloses her own basic primary educational concerns. In it she writes,

I hope my dear children that you attend school regularly and that you will be prepared to make a good examination when your turn comes. Besides being good and attentive at school as well as regular in your attendance, you should often ask St Joseph, your Patron, to help you . . . God loves and blesses children who remember him and do their duty.

**Women’s leadership in Colonial Australia**

As has been noted, Mary MacKillop grew up in an environment of unquestioned male leadership in both the secular world of government as well as the religious world of the churches. The structures were hierarchical and dogmatic appearing to have little appreciation of the colonial context in which they operated. The role of a woman in religion at this time was minimal, but as Patricia Brennan notes, in continuity
with ‘pioneering women elsewhere, she bore the brunt of isolation and carried the moral values of love and loyalty along with an uncritical acceptance of doctrines and laws codified for male advantage.’

Preceding Mary MacKillop in Australia were some significant Australian women who while loyal to their traditions, refused to be totally submissive to their religious hierarchies and became role models for many women who followed after them.

For example, Mary Haydock Reiby, currently pictured on the Australian twenty-dollar note, is described as ‘the most successful business person in the colony of New South Wales.’ Arriving in Australia as a 13 year-old convicted of horse stealing, she established successful shipping operations and Sydney warehouses from 1812-1817 and, as a committed Anglican, was associated with ‘various charitable organisations and became famous for her deeds in the field of education and religion.’

Also to be noted is Caroline Chisholm who was featured for twenty years on the five-dollar Australian banknote. Raised as an ‘evangelical’ Protestant and with a strong social consciousness she converted to Roman Catholicism prior to her marriage and emigration to Australia in 1838. It has been noted that she ‘left no institutional legacy to which the church can lay claim,’ but she did establish a school in 1862 for underprivileged girls in inner Sydney and ‘contributed much to the health and happiness of thousands of families, not to mention the health and happiness of a nation.’ Interestingly, Caroline Chisholm, although never canonized, has a continuing saintly status in the eyes of some Australian Protestant communities.

Ironically it is the church that she claimed as her own that has thus far failed to recognise her contribution. . .

. . it is interesting to note that the Anglican Church in England, lists her in its Calendar of Saints as a “Commemoration” – albeit a minor and optional celebration and the Uniting Church in Australia
acknowledges her contribution as ‘renewer of society’.  

Another significant Christian woman of the era is Mary McConnel, a staunch Presbyterian, who migrated to Australia from Scotland. Concerned about the widespread lack of education and worship facilities, she established and maintained a school and church in her own rural house in the Moreton Bay region. In addition, she was profoundly influenced by the untimely death of two of her own children. So she travelled back to Britain where she researched the current status of specialist medical care for infants and children. Based on her findings from hospitals in Edinburgh and London she founded the Brisbane Children’s Hospital in 1878.

It is not known whether, or to what extent, any of these women may have influenced Mary MacKillop directly, but the ordinary wives, mothers, aunts and sisters of the time did certainly make significant contributions to the well-being of society through the careful nurture of their families. For example, while in her first position as a teenage family governess in Penola, South Australia, Mary MacKillop wrote to her mother, Flora, describing the extent to which she had been influenced by Flora’s faith.

He has made your life one of many trials that in the midst of such you might serve Him in the manner most pleasing to Him. It was in hardships, poverty and even want that you had to rear your children, but in the bitterest trial and greatest need your confidence in Divine Providence never failed. May that bright confidence now enable you to give your children cheerfully to the service of God Who so highly honours them by giving them a desire for the Religious Life.

This largely hidden household expression of faith provided a protection from the religious scepticism that permeated much
of Australian life in the early days of occupation and settlement. It also was the backbone of resilience for many like the MacKillops who were impoverished in the severe economic depression that began in the mid 19th century and continued for decades. In response to public anxiety over the widespread poverty that engulfed the colony some ‘clergy pounded their pulpits and implored their congregations to contemplate such sufferings as a sign of the displeasure of almighty God for their sins as well as their madness and their folly.’ In retrospect, these clergy seem to have been more poorly formed and trained for a culturally appropriate Christian ministry to the wider Australian immigrant community than were the nurturing wives, mothers and sisters of the time who quietly and faithfully manifested the loving presence of the body of Christ.

In spite of a largely inadequate parish clergy, a significant number of lay Christian initiatives, including many charitable organisations, were founded to address the widespread consequences of poverty, dislocation and oppression in colonial Australia. The London Missionary Society commenced the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence in 1813, and the District Nursing Service began in 1820 with asylums for the poor, blind, aged and infirm opening the following year. The Sydney City Mission began in 1862, and the Society of Vincent de Paul in 1881. Women played a significant part in exercising all of these ministries and in the latter half of the 19th century ‘as men drifted away from the church and its authority diminished, missionaries and deaconesses were enlisted as paid workers, and religious sisters were needed in greater numbers than ever before.’ These women were largely working at a grassroots level but the viability of the organisations was totally dependent on their contributions. Furthermore, they shared a common mode of action that could today be described as ‘servant leadership.'

Mary MacKillop, a servant leader
Although they are from different religious traditions, the Protestant and Catholic women mentioned earlier, Mary Reiby, Mary McConnel, Caroline Chisholm and Mary MacKillop, all demonstrated a distinctive form of innovative leadership in their contributions to community development in 19\textsuperscript{th} century Australia. In retrospect, their operational modes were compliant with the concept of ‘servant leadership’ described by Robert Greenleaf more than one hundred and thirty years later. Greenleaf’s perspective is that

The servant-leader is servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions…The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.\textsuperscript{44}

This ethos of ‘servant leadership’ is being embraced currently in Australia by many Catholic and Protestant programs of Theological Field Education. Michael Kelly, has outlined seven significant aspects of praxis that demonstrate a person’s capacity for effective servant leadership in both the Church and in the community. These aspects include holding and articulating a life-giving vocational vision; demonstrating a living example of that vision through a nurturing lifestyle; modelling a collaborative working approach within a ministry team; managing change positively and appropriately; having a perspective that appreciates the context of one’s ministry in the light of the wider community’s needs; having the capacity to resolve conflict positively; and being able to preserve a healthy life balance.\textsuperscript{45}

The ministry of Mary MacKillop, as recorded in her own correspondence as well as in the letters she received from family, religious sisters and the wider church leadership, reveals a strong compatibility with most of these aspects of
servant leadership. Firstly, the vision of ministry that Mary had received was not one that she kept to herself and exposed only confidentially to others. Rather, her vision of reaching out to deprived people was one she shared so openly that it became the common missional vision for those who gathered around her. Her vision had not come from a sudden moment of supernatural clarity but had developed throughout her childhood and adolescence and seems to have become focused when as an eighteen year old she openly confessed a strong sense of religious call.

A vision will only ever be an imaginary hope if it is never enacted. Therefore, being able to live out the articulated vision is the second aspect of servant leadership. Mary MacKillop shared her vision, initially, with a mentor, Father Julian Woods and together they worked on the healthy development of the religious order that she founded in 1866. Initially, her first priority was for the order to meet the educational needs of poor children, but over time the institution itself, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, seems to have become her prime focus of action. She became the Mother, and she saw her religious Sisters as her own children with the local Diocese being a family home. Mary’s vision and goals were reviewed both internally and eternally, and in order to maintain a fair degree of transparency in her actions. Reports can be written that describe the outcomes of a vision but when the leader is the lone scribe it is reasonable to doubt the veracity of the report. Throughout Mary’s lifetime, however, external advisors were invited to audit the community and to attend the regular Retreats where the community would review their vision, and after reflecting on the feedback from their advisors they would renew their vows.

Third, while enacting her vision Mary MacKillop was able to delegate responsibilities effectively and appropriately. Her aim was to develop a community that served the needs of others and would be seen working in partnership with others rather than in complete isolation. As has been noted, during
the 19th century religion in Australia was seen as ‘the preserve of the respectable, and a weapon of an authoritarian status quo.’ Given this context, Mary both followed the protocols of her time, keeping in touch with her Catholic superiors but also attending to her own agenda in her own time and always with the well-being of her flock as a central focus. In spite of having no formal theological training or vocational formation she exhibited the outcomes of intense lifelong learning. In this way, she reflected the earliest apostolic teachings by justifying her ‘giftedness and suitability by . . . the exercise of it.’ She kept in contact with the communities she had founded by writing innumerable encouraging and informative letters to the sisters she had commissioned as leaders for those communities, often pleading for unity within the community.

The enemy of peace and unity would raise a storm if he could out of this little commencement of what will one day be something great in God’s workshop, but he will fail if my children unite and have but one mind with their Mother in it.

The fourth aspect of servant leadership is the capacity to manage change appropriately and the ever changing, challenging social structures in Australia during the 19th century required almost as much competence in change management as is necessary today. In addition to the complex social, political and religious changes she confronted in her later years, Mary MacKillop, was exposed to continuing change throughout her childhood, adolescence and young adult life. Over time, the Josephite schools were located in differing regions, states and even countries. While the vision remained constant, the context varied from place to place and required differing educational and management approaches. Her relationship with the Church changed at crucial times and her wise management of the excommunication she was given for a short period of time had a large part to play in her restoration.
The fifth aspect is the ability to maintain an appropriate perspective, a characteristic probably best illustrated in a poignant letter Mary wrote to her brother, Donald, a Jesuit priest. In the letter Mary reveals a capacity to see a bigger picture even though she is captured by the urgency of the present moment.

Often when smarting under insults and misrepresentations which I longed to resent, I would have to go and do the ‘dirty work,’ as many call it, simply because I could not resist God’s pleading voice or look. Ah, God was good to me. I see it all now more plainly than ever.52

Again, in one of her last letters she writes of her hope for the future in spite of some of the struggles the Order was facing at the time.

We must let no obstacles deter us from proceeding with courage in the path marked out for us. It may sometimes be dark and full of windings, but a beautiful bright light shines at the end of the path and a few more windings will bring us to it.53

Mary MacKillop’s letters over the years are peppered with instances of conflict management, the sixth aspect of servant leadership. Clearly, she recognised that religious communities are made up of human beings who, in spite of their spiritual commitments, will always struggle with their own egos. However she demonstrated constantly a capacity to supersede the human conflictual challenges and work towards outcomes that would nurture the common good of all.54 In particular, conflicts with the religious hierarchy were a challenge that Mary confronted directly and carefully.55 She kept all of the correspondence she had with church overseers56 and covered her back by making sure that significant correspondence was copied to all involved.57 She did not hesitate to confront priests and bishops who appeared to stand in the way of her vision, appealing to even higher authorities such as the ‘sacred heart’
to justify her stance. In terms of her own community, the Sisters of St Joseph, she once responded to an issue of internal conflict with the advice ‘If we see faults in each other, need we be surprised if we know ourselves and how faulty we are. Can we not at least be quiet about them, only mentioning what is necessary to a Superior and no one else.’ Nonetheless, there were several occasions when sisters would leave the Josephite community and join another Order.

Finally, the seventh aspect of servant leadership is the ability to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Mary appears to have had the capacity to compartmentalise her congregational work from the politics of the Catholic Church but her personal life was clearly embedded in her faith community. It is reported that ‘Mary never became bitter against the Church leaders that had opposed her’ going on to say that ‘Protestants, as well as Catholics, loudly praised her charity to the poor, her personal poverty, and her abstinence from proselytising.’ But there is a danger whenever a leader becomes entirely submissive to the needs of others and fails to confront directly any potentially damaging issues. As well as affecting the wider community, this pattern of behaviour can result in a leadership vacuum and even the demise of the leader. Mary, like many other religious women at the time whose words ‘endorsed the status quo,’ appears to have been focussed on the best outcomes for her community but clearly some of the life decisions she made were to her own detriment. Some letters show that she was at risk of physical, emotional and spiritual burnout, as well as suffering bouts of serious illness. For example, it is recorded that on one occasion of significant illness, she resisted the advice of her doctor to rest. On the positive side, Mary appears to have been able to share her feelings openly when communicating with ‘trusted friends,’ and it is in these letters that she acknowledges her own shortcomings while at the same time demonstrating a capacity for healthy spiritual reflection.

In terms of Mary MacKillop’s theological basis for a life of servant leadership, her choice of St Joseph as the Patron Saint
of her order is an interesting topic to explore. Mary is reported to have had a vision of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, when she was about five years of age and the words of a prayer she wrote in the 1860’s appear to reveal a special relationship she felt between herself and ‘Mother Mary.’ Then when she was twelve years old, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of Mary. So much of her life shows a spiritual continuity with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as depicted in the gospel of Luke. As a teenager, like the Virgin Mary she feels called to ‘hear and obey the Word of God’ in spite of a damaged family history; she maintains her religious connections and is faithful in her religious observances even in the face of rejection; and the ethos of Mary’s Magnificat permeates her theological reflections and her actions of social justice. In this context, Joseph becomes an obedient, trustworthy and supportive saintly male upon whom Mary MacKillop can rely and upon whom all her sisters can depend. Perhaps, the poignancy of identifying Joseph as her patron saint reflects on the actions of her own father, Alexander, who while providing some degree of intellectual sustenance, left her family disappointed, homeless and desolate. Ultimately, however, it will be the Cross that becomes her true focus and the inspiration for her life of personal sacrifice and servant leadership.

Conclusion
Mary McKillop is an example of an Australian woman who engaged with both religious and secular powers in order to serve the needs of disempowered people caught in the net of colonial captivity. She epitomises some basic Australian values as is evident in the descriptors used by a Protestant writer who described her recently as this ‘fair dinkum Aussie saint . . .this little battler, this feminist trailblazer and ecclesiastical troublemaker.’

One hundred years later there are still battlers and poor immigrants knocking at the Australian doors of political and religious systems who remain deaf to their cries and
protective of their own accumulated benefits. The religious issues today are being voiced in global and multi-faith languages and Josephite schools, now spread throughout the world, continue to listen and hear. Since the passing of Mary MacKillop in 1909, wars, widespread ethnic cleansing and pandemic infectious diseases have caused more human deaths than ever before in the history of humankind. The increasing wealth and status of the former British colonies have not made a great difference to the kind of human harmony envisaged in the 19th century. The political, economic and religious capacity to influence change remains, but the interests of wealthy corporate entities will often direct the outcomes. Religious revivals continue to break out in Asia and Africa but wealthy Western societies are seeing a rapid decline in allegiance to the traditional Christian churches. The groundwork done by people such as Mary MacKillop is bearing fruit, however. No longer is there open conflict between Catholics and Protestants; rather each is holding hands with the other as even greater political, religious and environmental issues are explored together in a context of mutual respect. The challenges continue and the need for both Church and society to revisit the kind of servant leadership modelled by Mary and her compatriots is needed as much today as it was in 19th century Australasia.

For over a century, Mary MacKillop has been hidden in the enclaves of religiosity but at last, in the process of beatification and canonisation, her story is being exposed, inspiring both Catholics and Protestants alike. It is an opportunity for all Australians to reflect upon where we have been and to envision the direction in which we are going. In the entry foyer of the Mary of the Cross Centre in Fitzroy is a triptych in bronze relief with its three panels summarising the life of ‘Mary of the Cross.’ The third panel depicts her ongoing influence amidst the high-rise buildings of Melbourne as the Mary of the Cross Centre continues to support families affected by drug and alcohol abuse. In the spirit of Mary MacKillop and her Sisters of St Joseph, this is a living prophetic space where Catholics and Protestants, as well as
people of all other faith confessions and none, continue to be welcomed by those who see the face of the non-discriminating Christ in all they meet.

END NOTES

3 Breward, Australia “The Most Godless Place Under Heaven”? , 41.
4 Clarke, A Short History of Australia, 69, notes that ‘In New South Wales in 1828, in a total population of 36,598, 16,442 convicts were men and 1,544 were women.’
9 Clarke, A Short History of Australia, 78.
11 Clarke, A Short History of Australia, 81.
12 Clarke, A Short History of Australia, 101. Note that Clarke’s use of gender exclusive language in his writing is probably justified in this context.
14 Clarke, A Short History of Australia, 94. ‘The government, the Presbyterians and the dissenters suggested a system of national schools, in which the children would be taught religious opinions but not religious doctrines. But neither the Anglicans nor the Catholics would have a bar of it. To both all attempts to teach something so vague as a religion on which all agreed would lead to indifference and unbelief.’
18 Clarke, A Short History of Australia, 95.
19 A G Austin, Australian Education, 1788-1900, Church, State and Public Education in Colonial Australia, (Melbourne/Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1961), 181-204.


22 Paul Gardiner *An Extraordinary Australian, Mary MacKillop*. (Newtown: David Ell Press, 1993), 107, 236-37, 455.


25 McCreadie, ‘The Evolution of Education in Australia,’ www.historyaustralia.org.au/ifhaa/schools/evelutio.htm accessed 10 June 2010. ‘In some cases in the city, 15-year-old girls were put in charge, albeit temporarily, of a class of 100 students not much younger than themselves. School inspectors and masters did not understand why these young girls could not control the class.’

26 The Josephites were committed to teach ‘all who were underprivileged – spiritually, educationally, culturally’ as stated in the Constitutions of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Sydney: Westmead Publishing, 1972), 3. Also see O’Brien, *Mary McKillop Unveiled*, 22-43.

27 Currently the Constitutions of the Sisters of St Joseph, 2-24 bases its educational ethos on the Declaration of Christian education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in 1965 and in clear continuity with the ethos of the earliest Josephites.


31 www.australiaonnet.com/about-australia/famous-australians/mary-reiby accessed 7 June 2010. Note that Mary Haydock Reiby died in 1855 when Mary MacKillop was an early teenager.

32 Recently, her image was replaced by that of Queen Elizabeth II.

33 Clara Staffa Geoghegan, ‘Caroline Chisholm And The Polemics Of Sainthood.’

34 Geoghegan, ‘Caroline Chisholm And The Polemics Of Sainthood,’ 10.


36 ‘A Word From Mary’ 27 November 1866 in Sheila McCreanor *Mary McKillop and Flora. Correspondence between Mary MacKillop and her mother Flora McDonald MacKillop* (North Sydney: Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2004), 35.

37 Clarke, *A Short History of Australia*, 91.

38 Patrick O’Farrell, ‘The Cultural Ambivalence of Australian Religion,’ in *Australian cultural history* edited by Samuel Louis Goldberg, Francis Barrymore Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 8. It was even asserted that
‘Australia attracted many of Britain’s clerical failure, the fools, the second-rate, the well-meaning incompetents.’


46 For example see the Letter to the Sisters on 2 December 1890 and to Monica Phillips on 19 January 1894 in McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 144-45, 159-60.


48 As in the letter to Father Fauvel in Temuka on 10 March, 1882 recorded by McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 11.

49 Peter Matheson, ‘Theology Whole and Wholesome,’ in Together in Ministry, Essays to honour John, 42.

50 For example see the letters to Monica Philips, 9 May 1884 and to the Sisters on 4 March 1891. McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 66-72, 146-48.

51 The Letter to Monica Philips, 9 May 1884 in McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath,71.

52 The Letter to Donald MacKillop SJ on 29 December 1897 in McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 235.

53 Letter to the sisters on 10 March 1907 in McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 384.

54 In continuity with an ethos described by Bruce Rumbold, ‘Building Resilience: The Local Congregation as a Health Promoting Community,’ in Together in ministry. Essays to honour John Paver, 29. ‘Churches, congregations, that will cooperate with only other social or cultural groups that share their ideologies will have very limited cooperation or partnership . . . [those] . . . That are prepared to risk focusing on the common good and shared interests are more likely to find allies and develop effective partnerships that transcend the sectoral interests of both.’

55 See Gardiner, An Extraordinary Australian, 341-42. Also, Letter to Monica Phillips on 12 November 1885, McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 120-23.

56 She writes about ‘hunting up old letters’ in a letter to Calasanctius Howley on 2 April 1884. See McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 52.

57 For example Letter to the sisters on 24 March 1884, McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 52.

58 For example the letter to Bishop Reynolds on 1 December 1888 in McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 137-39.

59 Letter to Raymond Smyth on 8 March 1888 and Ethelburg Job on 4 September 1894 in McCleanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath,134-35, 190-91.
See the comments on some separated sisters ‘who had ‘adopted a black habit’ much to Mary MacKillop’s chagrin in the letter to Patricia Campbell on 8 August 1894 in McCreanor, Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 181.


O’Brien, God’s Willing Workers, 290.

Letter to Andrea Howley on 23 March 1884 in McCreanor Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 35, 41.

For references to her health see the letters to Raymond Smyth on 20 August 1886 and 16 February 1887 and to Gertrude Mary Bertheau on 18 July 1894 in McCreanor Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 125-27, 130-31, 173.

See her letters to Calasanciatus Howley on 12 January 1884 and Andrea Howley on 23 March 1884 in McCreanor Mary McKillop on Mission to Her Last Breath, 35, 40-42.

O’Brien, Mary McKillop Unveiled, 16. ‘. . . my mother think of the day when I knelt but a child to ask you to be my Mother and to let me love no other mother but you, and I remember your gentle whisper when you said that you marked me as your child since my birth. . .’

Luke 1:38; 11:27


Luke 1:46-55


The triptych was commissioned by the Sisters of St Joseph and created by Melbourne artist Pauline Clayton in 2003.