

Stations of the Cross: A Journey with St Mary of the Cross MacKillop

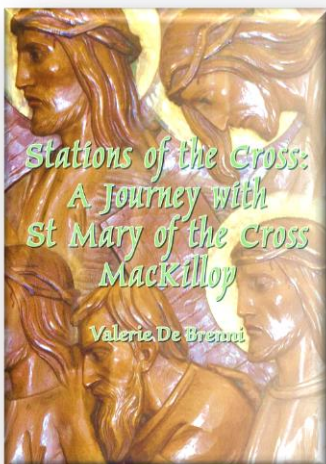
As we look at the life of Mary MacKillop we see a woman who perseveres in the journey of faith despite the suffering that she endures. There are times when Mary comes close to despair, she is no stranger to suffering. In her life she experiences hardship and poverty, the death of loved ones, sickness, the breakdown of a close friendship and unjust criticism; yet through it all she places her trust in God. Mary finds strength and meaning in the cross of Jesus. Like Jesus Mary finds the courage to enter into suffering rather than to run away from it.

Mary is known as *St. Mary 'of the Cross' MacKillop*.

Devotion of the 'Way' or 'Stations' of the Cross goes back to the time when early pilgrims visited the holy sites in Jerusalem. During these pilgrimages travelers called to mind the last moments in the life of Jesus by praying at the sites associated with Jesus' suffering and death. This practice was so moving that many Christians who were unable to travel to the Holy Land desired to do the same thing, and so Stations of the Cross were set up in churches.

During the Stations of the Cross we follow Jesus Christ in his passion and see ourselves reflected in him. To face life's dark side in ourselves and in our world, we need images of hope, and Jesus offers such hope in his journey to the cross and in his resurrection from the dead. By accompanying him on the Way of the Cross, we touch into the pain, desolation and courage of Jesus and learn to place our trust in God who in Jesus transforms death into new life.

Each of us, in our own way, experiences the pain of the human condition: sickness reminds us of the vulnerability of our bodies, relationships break down, friends betray us, we stand by helplessly as those who we love, suffer.



Valerie DeBrenni, a South Australian *Covenant Josephite*, has created a wonderful reflection booklet called *Station of the Cross: A Journey with St Mary of the Cross MacKillop*.

Throughout this year, each of our monthly eNewsletters will feature a reflection on one of the Stations of the Cross, and its connection with the life journey of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. You are invited to spend a little time each month journeying with Jesus and Mary MacKillop on their journeys, and to reflect on the way their sufferings mirror our own.

As you take this journey you are invited to

- first reflect at each Station upon what is happening to Jesus
- then explore the suggested links to the life of Mary MacKillop
- finally, make links between each Station and your own life



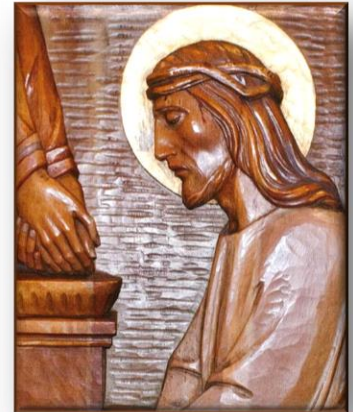
Image: © Dorothy Woodward rsj

Stations of the Cross: A Journey with St Mary of the Cross MacKillop - available for purchase @ \$7.95
from Mary MacKillop Place Bookshop, Mount Street, North Sydney or on line:
<https://www.sosj.org.au/product/stations-of-the-cross-a-journey-with-st-mary-of-the-cross-mackillop/>

Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death

*Pilate brought Jesus outside and said to the people, "Look at your king!"
At this they shouted, "Away with him! Crucify him!"
Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.*

Pontius Pilate was the prefect of Judea at the time of Jesus' death. Feasts like the Passover attracted large crowds and it was the task of Pilate to work with the Jewish leaders to keep the peace. Pilate questions Jesus about his identity and tries to persuade the crowd to have him release Jesus. When the crowds call for Jesus to be crucified Pilate has a change of heart. Washing his hands before the crowd as a sign that he believes his innocence, Pilate finally gives up any pretence of seeking justice for Jesus and hands him over to be crucified.



Moments in the life of Mary MacKillop

We may feel our crosses hard at times, but our courage should rise with them

(Mary MacKillop 14.4.1882)

There were times in her life when Mary MacKillop was falsely accused. Early in the life of the Institute, one of the young Sisters who had only been in the convent for a few months decided to leave. She did this by simply disappearing. This caused scandal, because those who were unconvinced of the worth of the Institute wrote letters to the local newspaper. Some priests used this scandal to complain to the Bishop about Mary, and this placed her in a difficult financial position. Over time, she also had to contend with some Sisters who were jealous of her position as founder of the Institute.

Moments in my life

- ❖ Have I ever been unjustly condemned? How did I respond?
- ❖ Have I ever 'washed my hands' of a situation when I was being called to speak out or act?

Take a moment to reflect in silence upon these aspects of your life. Speak to God about those times when you have been unjustly condemned.

Embrace the reality of your life right now, God is there.

Prayer

Jesus, you stand before Pilate and the people, falsely accused. Give me the courage to stand with those people who today have no voice and are powerless. Help me to listen with compassion to their stories and give me the courage to respond in meaningful ways. Let me extend a hand of friendship to those who need it most. Give me a generous open heart.

Forgive those moments in my life when I have falsely accused others, or when I have silently stood by and allowed others to be falsely accused.

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Image: Station 1, Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel, North Sydney