

Australia's Mary MacKillop — a remarkable pioneering woman, radical thinker and educational reformer — will be canonised (recognised as a saint) in Rome tomorrow.



Mary MacKillop of the Cross, Australia's first saint.

The story of Mary MacKillop

MARY Helen MacKillop was born in Melbourne on January 15, 1842, the eldest of eight children. Her parents were Alexander MacKillop and his wife Flora MacDonald,

both immigrants to Australia from Scotland. By the age 16, Mary was the main provider for her family. Her religious work began with the influence.

Below: Mary as a child.



encouragement and mentoring of Father Julian Tenison Woods, whom she met at Penola, South Australia.

“Never see a need without doing something about it”
—Mary MacKillop

On August 15, 1867, Mary MacKillop became Sister Mary of the Cross. By the time she took her final vows on December 8, 1869, Mary had 72 sisters in her order, the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

Mary was a revolutionary thinker who put social justice into practice for the first time in Australia by opening schools for the needy, orphanages, accommodation centres and refuges for ex-prisoners and ex-prostitutes.

By 1869 the Sisters of St Joseph had established 21 schools around Adelaide and surrounding districts for poor children not just the financially able.

Mary visited Tasmania in 1897 on her way

to New Zealand. She arrived and departed on October 18, noting in her diary that she had been kindly received by all at the Good Shepherd Convent (now Mount St Canice), Sandy Bay. For many of her 67 years, Mary

clashed with priests and bishops who wanted to control her and her order of sisters. She was even excommunicated for insubordination on September 22, 1871. This was later renounced.

By the time of Mary's death on August 8, 1909, the Sisters of St Joseph had grown to 650 in number and were teaching more than 12,000 children throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Pope John Paul II beatified Mary MacKillop on January 19, 1995, at Randwick Racecourse, Sydney, naming her the Blessed Mary MacKillop.

Pope Benedict XVI will be presented with a lock of Mary MacKillop's hair as part of the canonisation ceremony in Rome.

Today, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, often called the Josephites, continue Mary's good work with children and the needy.

Classroom activity: Work with a partner to present a summary of newspaper reports about Mary MacKillop over the next week.



Celebrating the launch of Mary MacKillop's website earlier this year.

Cyberspace

The official Mary MacKillop website www.marymackillop.org.au offers users an interactive journey into the life of Australia's first saint. The website features numerous

images of Mary, an historical biographical timeline, downloads of songs, readings of her final letters and virtual tours of Mary's tomb and her last home, Alma Cottage, in North Sydney.

Classroom activity: Visit the website and explore the life of Mary MacKillop. After reading the information provided, write your own account of her life, considering her beginnings, growth, challenges and influences.



Father Julian Tenison Woods. Courtesy of the Josephite Mission and History Centre.

Julian Tenison Woods

FATHER Julian Woods was a friend and mentor of Mary MacKillop who helped her establish the order of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. A remarkable man in his own right, Father Woods had a strong interest in Tasmania.

Born in England in 1832, he initially followed his father into a newspaper career but switched to the priesthood in 1850. He left for Australia in 1854 with a dream of providing an education for poor children in isolated areas — arriving in the largely unexplored Tasmania in 1855.

He left for South Australia within months and did not return until 1874. In Adelaide he once again found work as a journalist before finally being ordained in 1857. He was appointed to the parish of Penola, where he established a school and would eventually meet Mary MacKillop.

In 1874 Father Woods was invited to return to Tasmania to preach to the scattered population. He was a popular speaker and the *Mercury* regularly reported on his addresses — both theological and geological. He expressed concern for Tasmania's forests, writing in 1878: "The only way to prevent the wholesale destruction of timber

will be by proclaiming reserves or state forests. The matter is one which the legislature should deal with promptly, or the forests of Tasmania, peerless and priceless as they once were, will soon be things of the past."

Mary MacKillop recorded that Tasmania's invigorating climate had a beneficial effect on Father Woods' health. She also wrote: "A geologist or botanist finds many things to interest him in Tasmania, and Fr Tenison Woods, being both, was naturally much pleased."

He wrote many books and scientific papers, with a high proportion relating to Tasmania. A search on Google Books lists 116 works under his name. In 1875 he helped arrange and name 86 varieties of Tasmanian shells. He also gathered data and wrote on the state's geology, zoology and palaeontology.

In November 1876, Fr Julian said his goodbyes and left Tasmania. The man had made his mark and the *Mercury* occasionally advised its readers of his movements, including, in October 1889, "the Rev. Julian Tenison Woods, the scientist, expired at Sydney early in the week." He was not quite 57 years old.

Classroom activity: Use the internet and other sources to explore some of the scientific works of Julian Tenison Woods.

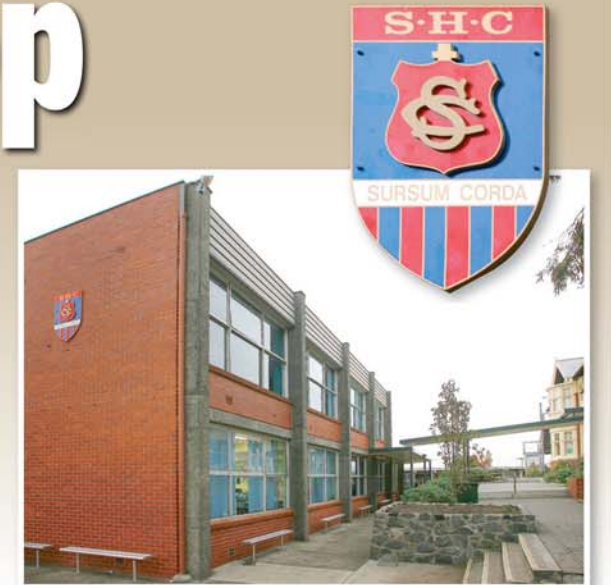
Sisters in Tasmania

THE pioneering educational and social work of Mary MacKillop and her band of Sisters of St Joseph spread to Tasmania when five sisters transferred from Bathurst, NSW, stopping on the way to spend time with Mother Mary MacKillop.

Arriving in Launceston in May 1887, the five sisters found their proposed residence in Launceston was not available. Instead, they were offered a four-roomed cottage at Westbury. A school was opened the day after their arrival, with eight students enrolled.

Rapid expansion followed, with convent schools opening at Forth in May 1889 and at Ulverstone in July 1889. When another convent was established at Devonport in January 1891 it gave the Tasmanian Josephites the unique record of founding four houses in four years.

Further foundations followed with convents at Oatlands in 1893, Zeehan in 1894 and New Town in 1908, and further convent schools at Cygnet (1896), Richmond (1899), Tunnack (1891), Colebrook (1894), Lymington (1900), Franklin (1900), New Town (1908), Moonah (1932), Geeveston (1938), Newstead (1938), Smithton (1951), Rosebery (1958), Lenah Valley (1961), Devonport (1969) and Wynyard (1972).



Sacred Heart College at New Town.

Regis House, a hostel for business girls, was opened in Launceston in 1946. Waterton Hall boarding school opened in the Tamar Valley in 1947 and St Joseph's nursing home opened in 1968.

In the intervening years, some of the schools have closed or amalgamated and some have been passed to other administrators, but others have expanded and grown.

In the early 1990s, the Sisters of St Joseph participated in the restructuring of secondary Catholic education in the south which resulted in the establishment in 1995 of Guilford Young College for senior secondary students on two

campuses (Hobart and Glenorchy). The Sisters are represented on the college's governing council.

When MacKillop College opened at Mornington in 1995, a Sister of St Joseph was on the staff. At this time, there is a Sister of St Joseph on the Governing Council.

In 2010 the Sacred Heart Convent at New Town was refurbished to house the Josephite Mission and History Centre.

Classroom activity: Using a map of Tasmania, locate the towns where schools were established by the Sisters of St Joseph. Is there one near you?



Sister Jill Dance at the Josephite Centre in New Town

History centre

A NEW museum at New Town tells the story of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph, along with those of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods.

Archbishop Adrian Doyle officially opened the Josephite Mission and History Centre in March, in the presence of representatives of the Federation of Sisters of St Joseph and descendants of the Tenison Woods family.

"The blessing and opening of the centre is a fitting way for us to mark the recognition by the Universal Church of our co-founder, Blessed Mary MacKillop, as Australia's first canonised saint," said Sister Jill Dance, congregational leader of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania.

"The work that she began with Father Julian Tenison Woods has been carried on in this part of the country by the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph. It is her legacy that we celebrate," Sr Jill said.

The two-storey building on the corner of Cross and Clare Sts, New Town, has been a landmark as the Sacred Heart Convent since 1908. A century later the Sisters made the decision to preserve the beautiful old building and allow it to tell the story of the Sisters of St Joseph since they first came to Tasmania in 1887.

The name "Josephite Mission and History Centre" was deliberately chosen, acknowledging that the Sisters share a gift passed down to them by Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods with many lay people.

The centre is open on weekdays between 10am and 5pm and by appointment on weekends and public holidays. Admission is \$1 for students and \$3 for adults. For bookings or inquiries phone 6228 1628 or look up the website at www.tassiejosephites.org.au



Mary MacKillop Chapel

AT the heart of Mary MacKillop Place in Sydney is the historic chapel built in memory of Mary MacKillop in 1913. The Memorial Chapel holds the tomb of Mary MacKillop and has become a place of pilgrimage for thousands of people who visit to pray and reflect.

Pope Benedict XVI prays at Mary MacKillop's tomb in Sydney in 2008.

This year, the 101st anniversary of her death in 1909 was a significant day as the countdown for Mary MacKillop's canonisation began.

Classroom activity: Explore the Mary MacKillop Place website at www.marymackillopplace.org.au