



St. Mary MacKillop

Born: 15 January 1842 at Fitzroy, Melbourne, Australia as Maria Ellen MacKillop

Died: 8 August 1909 at Sydney, Australia following a stroke, relics transferred to a vault at the Mother of God in the Memorial Chapel, Mount Street, Sydney

Canonized: 17 October 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI, first native-born Australian saint

Patronage: Australia, Wagga Wagga, Australia.

Also known as Maria Ellen MacKillop, Marie Ellen MacKillop, Mother Mary of the Cross

Eldest child of Alexander and Flora MacKillop, poor Scottish emigrants to Australia. Her father had studied for the priesthood, but was never ordained. Mary was educated at private schools and by her father. To help support her family, she worked as a nursery governess and store clerk while still in her teens. Tutor in Melbourne, Australia. Teacher at the Portland School #510 in 1862. Established a "Seminary for Young Ladies" in her home. Known for her holiness, her constant work in the local church, and for turning to prayer before making decisions. Mary felt a call to the religious life, but felt obligated to continue teaching to help support her family. However, a scandal caused by a jealous and corrupt education official gave her reason to leave the school without guilt, and with the backing of her family. Mary and her sister moved to Penola, South Australia. There Mary met Father Julian Tennison Woods with whom she opened a free Catholic school for the poor. Co-founded the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart in 1866; it was Australia's first religious order. It had a mission educate poor children in remote areas, and the Sisters received episcopal approval in 1868. Mother Mary soon had seventeen schools under her care. Mary's independence and social ideas concerned Church authorities, and she was ordered by her bishop, who believed some exaggerated stories about the educator, to surrender control of the schools and her Order. She refused, and was excommunicated in 1871.

Mary was crushed, but never blamed Church officials; she prayed that some good would come from the action, and she suffered through the. In 1872 her bishop, having determined the baseless nature of the accusations, apologized, and returned Mary to full communion. She visited Pope Blessed Pius IX in 1873, and travelled through England, Ireland and Scotland to seek funds for her schools. Superior-general of her Order in 1875. She travelled from house to house in the Order for the rest of her life, working to improve education for the poor, and general conditions for the Aborigines. She was a prolific correspondent, over 1,000 of Mary's letters have survived. Her order continues its good work today with hundreds of Sisters in Australia, New Zealand, and Peru.