



Feast of St Mary of the Cross McKillop

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

**St Francis Xavier Church, Armadale Parish
Sunday 8 August, 2021**

It has been a little while since the Australian bishops have been able to meet together at McKillop Place in North Sydney due to a building program and COVID. Our Conferences have been very special since we began meeting there and having the privilege of celebrating the daily Masses around the tomb of Mary McKillop, Australia's first recognised saint.

However there is an irony about the bishops meeting there. Although the current bishops of Australia honour and celebrate the life and faith of St Mary, bishops and priests in her day were not so inclined, and she had many battles with some of them.

The challenges that she faced, though, never led her to criticise her opponents. Her words and writings instead show that she possessed the Spirit of Jesus, as they reveal her ability to forgive and be compassionate.

Mary has been recognised by the Church as one worthy of imitation, a model of Christian living. This is not so much because she performed great miracles and spectacular signs, but because of her belief and trust in the providence of God. She lived with an unshakable belief that if God led her to some project, then God would provide what was required for it to be a success.

She was led to find ways to serve the poor, and care for women and children who were destitute or orphaned. She cooperated with the Holy Spirit to provide education to all-comers, even in the remotest places in the country, where schools could not be provided by anyone else.

Mary believed in and experienced the providence of God as she allowed herself to be led and guided by the Spirit, who accompanied and strengthened her, and helped her to find the way through the challenges she encountered, and enabled her to do her part in building the Kingdom of God in this country.

She is a saint because she trusted, without doubt, that God would provide.



The Church at large, in our time, is being called to trust that, through the action of the Holy Spirit, it will be provided with the way through the challenges we face today. The Plenary Council will be meeting for its first session in October and it will call on our faith and trust in the guidance of the Spirit.

The Council is being called to listen to what the Spirit is asking of the Church in Australia. As the vision recounted in the Book of Revelation, the Spirit asked the early Christian communities to return to their original vibrancy and Christ-centredness. The Plenary Council is the occasion in our times for the Holy Spirit to speak to the Church in Australia and for us to listen.

Listening to the Spirit means to listen with a discerning heart. Our preparation for the Council has required each person to listen to the Spirit by putting aside our agendas. It will provide with a way through the many issues that the Church faces in Australia, again in and with the Spirit.

A parish is also called to listen to what the Spirit is saying. The Parish Pastoral Council essentially is called to assist the ministry of the parish priests in discerning where the Spirit wants to lead the community in making its contribution to building the Kingdom of God. The pastoral plan that it develops must be guided by the Spirit in prayer.

The Spirit wishes to speak to us personally as well.

There is a wonderful prayer of reflection inspired by St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. It is called, Examen. It is known as the Examination of Conscience, and yet it is more than that.

It is something that we can use as we come to the end of each day and it helps us to keep in touch with the Spirit, who accompanies us during each day.

It is simply a short reflection on the events of the day. We recall what in the day has excited me? There will be encounters with others and experiences that have given joy, happiness, and been a blessing.

We turn next to those things that have caused me concern and left me saddened or troubled or fearful.

We move next to pray, asking what is Holy Spirit saying to me, revealing to me about me; about the others with whom I have interacted and how I can “step into their shoes” to understand why the things were said and done.

Finally, I can pray, giving thanks for all of these experiences, the positive and the difficult ones, and finish the day in the love and mercy of God, ready to begin the new day with whatever lies ahead.



The Church throughout the nation, our parish and each of us personally can open ourselves to the Spirit and allow ourselves to be guided and led by the Spirit, encouraged by the life and faith of Mary McKillop.

St Mary of the Cross McKillop allowed herself to be guided by the Spirit and the love of God shone through her life. She was a woman of sincere compassion, who acted with kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. As St Paul wrote, she was able with the Spirit to bear with even the most disagreeable person and looked for the good in the others around her.

May her trust in and experience of the providence of God encourage us to hold the same confidence in the Spirit working in and with us.