

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT 2023

*I am the light*  
of the world

Reflection and Prayer for Lent with Sunday readings and a spiritual teacher  
from our Catholic tradition - Saint Mary of the Cross Mackillop.

# SIGN OF THE CROSS.

Loving God, when we think we 'see', open our eyes, to see with your light.

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## FROM THE READINGS

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**Gospel:** As he went along, Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered. He was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him. As long as day lasts we must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.' Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (the name means 'one who has been sent'). So he went off and washed and came back able to see ... They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had gained his sight, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'That man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was division among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' The man answered, 'He is a prophet.' However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind without first sending for the parents of the man who had gained his sight and asking them, 'Is this man really the son of yours who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but how he can see, we don't know, nor who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is old enough: let him speak for himself.' His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to ban from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.' So the Jews sent for the man again ...

And they ejected him. Jesus heard they had ejected him, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You have seen him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him.

*John 9:1-7, 13-24, 34b-38 from the Sunday Gospel John 9:1-42*

— FROM SAINT MARY OF THE CROSS MACKILLOP 1842-1860 —

**Mary** was born in a Melbourne suburb, now Brunswick, the eldest child of Scottish immigrant parents. The family moved often as their father tried different forms of employment. Mary, the eldest often cared for the younger children. She experienced poverty, uncertainty and grief when her beloved grandfather drowned and a baby brother died. Mary developed a strong sense of what is right and a desire to help the poor. In her teens she helped provide for her family, as a governess nearby, with stationers and then as a governess in Penola for the children of relatives. There she met Fr Julian Woods, a Jesuit priest concerned about the lack of education for bush children, including those of his own parish.

With the help of Mary and some of her siblings, a small school was begun in a house. In November 1856, Mary, her sister Lexie and a friend, began to dress as postulants for religious life as Sisters of St Joseph. Two schools, in Mt Gambier and Penola, were established. Lexie found religious life was not her calling but other young women came to join the teaching work of the Sisters. They begged for food and donations to help the poor. Soon there were more schools and many sisters led by Mother Mary of the Cross. The work expanded into many areas of need.

The Sisters of St Joseph survived the storm of Mary's excommunication, later revoked by Bishop Sheil as he lay dying. Throughout her life, there were trials and troubles for Mary and for the Sisters of St Joseph. Mary met challenges with calmness, wisdom, patience and tolerance for those who made things difficult. She was very familiar with the Ignatian rules for discernment and perceptive in her understanding of human nature and situations. She listened to those who needed a listening ear and wrote to many.

## MARY'S WORDS

**Remember** we are but travellers here.

**We must teach more by example** than by word.

**Do all you can** with the means at your disposal and calmly leave the rest to God.

**Courage, courage,** trust in God who helps you in all things.

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

**Let God's Spirit guide you** in your choice.

**Never see a need** without doing something about it.

**God gives me strength** for what is necessary.

**If our intention is pure** and we have charity in our hearts, we shall have God with us – and with Him on our side, what need we fear?

**Guard the spirit of charity**, the spirit of charity so dear to him.

**Ah, my sisters, God has done wonders for us.** He has tried us normally and comforted us wonderfully.

**Oh do love one another**, dear Sisters, do bear with one another, do think well of one another. No matter what has been said of you, or done to you, forget all now ... How can we have peace or charity whilst constantly recalling past injuries?

**All the phases of our lives are directed** by the all-controlling hand of God, and His designs are ever for the best. From the heavy storm which fell now so many years ago in the Institute, much good accrued – which, though not apparent then, is plain enough to one looking back on those troubled days from the quiet and calm of the present hour. The trials which came later have been productive of blessings which are obvious at a glance.

## PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- **Ask** for God's guidance.
- **Read** the scripture passages and words of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, aloud or silently.
- **Reflect and pray**, stopping to ponder any 'stand out' words or phrases. 10 mins
- **Respond** 10-15 mins

Individuals: Write or sit quietly with your reflections.

Groups: Share your responses and listen to others. 2-3 mins each

o What stands out for you?

o What do you want to take with you?

- **Express a hope for the future.**

## PRAYER

*Lord our God,  
your Son so loved the world  
that he gave himself up to death for our sake.  
Strengthen us by your grace,  
and give us a heart willing to live  
by that same love. Amen.*

*Daily Prayer from the Divine Office, Sydney: E.J.Dwyer, 1974, 239*



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