Mary MacKillop

Mary MacKillop was born on January 15th 1842 in Melbourne, Victoria. Her parents were born in Scotland and came to live in Australia. She had three sisters and four brothers.

Mary cared about the people who had no one to look after them. She cared for boys and girls who just roamed the streets, children in the country who had no school to go to, people who were old and sick and people who had nowhere to live. Mary wanted more than anything to help these people.

Mary went to work as a teacher in a little country town in South Australia called Penola. There she met Father Julian Tenison Woods who also wanted to do something for the poor children who could not afford to pay the money needed to go to school. Together, in 1866, they began a school in an old stable. Until this time people had to pay for education, so only the rich could afford to send their children to school. Education at Mary's school was free, and all were welcome. Two of Mary's younger sisters also taught in the school and other young women came to help them.

On March 19th 1866, Mary began the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph. Now as a Sister, she dedicated her life to doing God's work. As more and more young women joined Mary as Sisters, they were able to start more schools.

In Adelaide they opened a place for women who had nowhere to live, an orphanage for children who had no parents to look after them and a house where poor people could come and stay. The Sisters visited people who were in jail and those who were poor and sick.

Mary MacKillop was kind to all people, even if they did not agree with her. There were some people who believed that she was not following the rules of the Catholic Church. They thought people should have to pay for education. Then people started to tell lies about her, saying she was a drunkard and a lady of wickedness. The people in charge said that she must leave the church. Now Mary had no where to live, because she had no home of her own. Until this time her home had been provided by the church. She had no money to buy food. A kind Jewish man named Mr. Solomon gave her money, and a kind lady from the Presbyterian Church gave her a place to live. This lady was the great grandmother of the Australian politician, Alexander Downer. She supported Mary and helped her continue her work.

Mary decided to travel to Rome to present her case. She asked the Pope for permission to continue her work, and this was granted. Mary sailed to England and Ireland where she recruited more women to come and help her.

Mary set up many more schools in Australia and New Zealand, helping the poor to get an education. As Mary continued to love and care for people, the Bishop who had once rejected Mary apologized for his wrong attitude towards her.

Mary died on August 8th 1909 in Alma Cottage, North Sydney. Mary helped many people during her lifetime and after she died, the Sisters of St Joseph kept on doing the good work she had started.

Mary MacKillop kept her faith in God and bravely challenged those who did not support her vision for a more caring world. Mary is an important Australian who spent her life helping people, especially children. The Catholic church recognize Mary as Australia's first saint.

http://www.marymackillopplace.org.au/museum/education_resources_jp.asp

Activities

1. How do we know that Mary was a kind person?
2. What was special about the schools she set up?
3. How did she help orphans?
4. How did she help women with nowhere to live?
5. This Bible verse tells us about Mary's actions when the church tried to stop her work. Write out the verse: Matthew 5:44
6. How did Mary act towards those who were against her?
7. What does the Bible say about treating those who are against us? Write out this verse: Acts 5:29;
8. How do you think Mary traveled to England, Italy and New Zealand in those days?
9. How do you think she traveled from South Australia to Sydney?
10. What dangers do you think she might have faced when traveling?
11. List two ways in which Mary showed bravery.
12. How was Mary helped by non-Catholic people who loved God? Who were they?
13. Who, in the story, said 'sorry' for being wrong?
14. In one sentence, say why you think Mary was a servant of God.
15. According to the Bible, who are the saints? 1 Corinthians 1:2