



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE PHILIPPINES,  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA

## LITURGY OF LAUDS

### *HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II*

*St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney  
Thursday, 19 January 1995*

*Your Eminence,  
Dear Sisters and Friends in Christ,*

*"This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118(117): 24).*

1. Today, for the first time an Australian is to be raised to the glory of the altar. "The tender mercy of our God" (Lk. 1: 78) has shone upon the face of his Church in this continent with the *radiant holiness of your foundress and intercessor: Mother Mary MacKillop*. I warmly greet each one of you: the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the Federated Sisters of Saint Joseph, the Josephite Associates in Mission, and the members of the wider Josephite family.

Many of you have travelled great distances – from the remotest areas of Australia, from Cambodia, Ireland, New Zealand and Peru – for the Beatification of Mother Mary of the Cross. We are gathered here in Sydney to venerate and invoke the intercession of this fervent and stalwart woman whom the Lord made "holy and blameless and irreproachable before him" (Col. 1: 22). It is God's *sovereign "grace" of holiness and love embodied* in the life of Mother Mary which *is the principal reason for our rejoicing*. The Beatification of Mary MacKillop reminds us that all efforts to renew the face of the earth (Cf. Ps. 104(103): 30) are sterile if they are not grounded in *the gift of new and abundant life* by which a person "is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a 'dwelling place of the Holy Spirit', a living temple of God" (John Paul II,

*Dominum et Vivificantem*, 58).

2. Dear Friends: Mary MacKillop cannot be understood without reference to her *Religious vocation*. The recent Synod of Bishops on the consecrated life reflected on many questions regarding consecration itself. What clearly emerged from the Synod's discussion is the fact that the consecrated life is a specific vocation, not to be confused with other forms of commitment and dedication to the apostolate. People look to Religious to walk side by side with them along the path of life, *precisely as those who are wise in the ways of God*. Mother Mary of the Cross did not just free people from ignorance through schooling, or alleviate their suffering through compassionate care. She worked *to satisfy their deeper, though sometimes unconscious, longing for "the unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Eph. 3: 8).

Through the redemptive Death and Resurrection of Christ, the Kingdom of God is taking root in history – and *you are tending its growth*. To the degree that you make "contemplation of divine things and assiduous union with God in prayer" your foremost responsibility (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 683, 1) – you become leading agents of society's deepest transformation. The Lord has consecrated you "to bring good tidings to the afflicted" (Is. 61: 1)! The world which is deceived by false promises needs *the distinctive and visible witness of holiness and moral integrity provided by religious consecration*. God's people are helped and supported more by what you are than by what you do. They need to see in your lives the values of fidelity to the Church's sacramental and liturgical life, personal prayer centred on Christ and the Trinitarian life of God, simple and warm community life, preferential love for the poorest, freedom in obedience and the joy of always belonging to God (Cf. John Paul II, *Evangelica Testificatio*, 55).

3. In a word, what the Church and society look for in those who embrace the consecrated life is that they be living witnesses of what it means to follow "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1Cor. 2: 2). Mother Mary of the Cross shines before us as an outstanding model of a woman who *embraced the Cross, not as a burden or a scandal, but as the most effective way of being united with the Lord her Spouse*. She once wrote that the Cross is "a sweet and dear instrument in the hands of a great and good Father in making His children all that such a Father has a right to expect His chosen children to be".

Just as the "new and everlasting Covenant" was established through "the blood of his cross" (Col. 1: 20), so too *the profession of the evangelical counsels consists in making a sacrificial and total gift of self to God in a new consecration* (Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 7). This "special consecration", which entails an original charism, enables a person to scale the heights of love: a complete love, dedicated to Christ under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and, through Christ, offered to the Father. By professing the counsels you proclaim that Christ is to be loved with an undivided heart (Cf. 1Cor. 7: 34), embraced as your priceless treasure (Cf. Mt. 6: 21) and obeyed as your only Lord (Cf. Eph. 4: 5). Interior freedom and genuine spiritual maturity are the blessed inheritance of those who "lose their life" for the sake of Christ (Cf. Mt. 16: 25).

4. Among the pressing issues facing the People of God in Australia there is the need for an understanding of the dignity and mission of women, in the family, in society and in the Church, which is faithful to "the truth of the Gospel" (Gal. 2: 14). An authentic theology of woman, based upon an anthropology revealed in the mystery of Creation and Redemption, brings to light women's feminine "originality" and particular "genius" (Cf. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 10 and 30). Women who seek a true Christian concept of femininity can look to the free and active role assumed by Mary of Nazareth, the Virgin-Mother of the Lord. In her, all women can discover "the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 46).

It must be clear that the Church stands firmly against every form of discrimination which in any way compromises the equal dignity of women and men. The complete equality of persons is however accompanied by a *marvellous complementarity*. This complementarity concerns not only the roles of men and women but also, and more deeply, their make-up and meaning as persons (Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 50). For that reason I am convinced that *a mistaken anthropology is at the root of the failure of society to understand Church teaching on the true role of women*. That role is in no way diminished but is in fact enhanced by being related in a special way to motherhood – the source of new life – both physical and spiritual. The Church therefore faces the challenge of finding *fresh and creative ways of recognizing and integrating the specific charisms of women*, which are essential to building up the Body of Christ in unity and love.

5. We are preparing to cross the threshold of the Third Christian Millennium. In order to do so without fear our hearts must be firmly set on Christ, "the hope of glory" (Col. 1: 27). The whole Church, including Religious Institutes, must be ever more sensitive to all that the Spirit is saying (Cf. Rev. 2: 7) as the Great Jubilee draws near. With serenity and confidence in God's mercy, individuals and communities are being challenged – as I wrote in the recent Apostolic Letter announcing the Jubilee of the Year 2000 – to "purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency, and slowness to act" (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 33).

During the remaining years of our century, we will be in the period of a "new Advent", a time of *profound conversion of mind and heart, which the Apostle Paul referred to as "a spiritual revolution"* (Cf. Eph. 4: 23). As Mother Mary of the Cross lay dying she sent her Sisters a message of evangelical simplicity and power: "Do not be afraid", she wrote. "Love one another, bear with one another, and let charity guide you in all your life". This is the spirit we need to live the "new Advent".

6. Today we praise you, O God, for your gracious gift to us of Mother Mary of the Cross. We thank you for the wonders of holiness which you wrought in her as a disciple of Jesus and *a faithful daughter of the Church*. Beloved Sisters and dear Friends: From this day forward you will have a powerful intercessor before the throne of God in the person of Blessed Mary MacKillop. I pray that

her example of ardent love for the Church, the Body of Christ, will ever inspire you to serve the Lord with gladness – in the weak, the brokenhearted and the oppressed. In Mary MacKillop all Australians have a sign of the flowering of holiness in their midst. Let us truly "rejoice and be glad" (Ps. 118(117): 24). Amen.

And I am truly rejoicing, truly rejoicing that I am in your midst. I say, Pax.

As I entered the cathedral, I met many of you, Sisters, and everyone of you was for me a source of admiration for the mystery you bring in your hearts. The mystery of a new love. Once Jesus Christ called you, everyone of you, and said to her: follow me, be my bride, I am the bridegroom of the souls. Be my bride, my spouse. Become my bride, and you will become mother of so many children. This great mystery I admire in everyone of you, in every Sister and Superior, religious Sister and religious Superior in the whole world. And I am so glad for being here among you for this great day when the first among you, Mary MacKillop, will be beatified.

Thank you very much.