

In today's first Reading we hear an account of King Solomon proclaiming (with a loud voice) to the Assembly of Israel: 'devote yourselves completely to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping God's commandments'. Solomon, in his wisdom, knew that God had never failed the people, that God would not leave them, abandon them or fail in any of God's promises to them. For their part, the Israelites were urged to 'walk in God's statutes, to keep God's commandments'. This was their part of the deal with a faithful God. By their observance of the commandments, the whole world would come to know of their faithful God. As we know, for the people of the Old Testament, keeping the commandments meant not just abiding by the Ten given to Moses, but also abiding by the 613 rules and regulations laid down in eleven Chapters of the book of Leviticus of the Old Testament.

In today's Gospel the writer, John, has Jesus saying again to God's faithful people, you must keep the commandments, as Jesus himself did throughout his life. But in Jesus, the multitudinous rules of Leviticus, and even the 10 commandments themselves, are perfectly summed up in Jesus words: love one another as I have loved you. Simple but profound. If love is at the heart of our lives, all else is in its right place. If love is at the heart of our lives, our interactions with others will be harmonious and of God. If love is at the heart of our lives, we can do nothing else but reach out to others in kindness, generosity and justice.

Mary MacKillop once came to Mass here in Corranbong. The Church has proclaimed her a saint, one whom we are certain is with God in eternity, at one with the God whom she loved and served in her earthly life. Mary knew the primacy of the commandment of love. One of the Sisters who knew her personally was a Western Australian, Sr Blandina O'Donnell, who made her Novitiate under Mary's direction. She said of her: 'When speaking – as she often did - on charity she would say 'love one another, help one another, pray for one another.'<sup>1</sup> Sr Blandina added that during the time of her own Novitiate and right up to the time of Mary's death, she 'ever regarded her to be a saint'.

Another Sister who knew Mary, Sr Helena McCarthy, recalled an incident in which she witnessed Mary's great love from the heart, for another person. Helena recalls: 'my first experience of Mother Mary's charity was one day

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<sup>1</sup> Memories of Mary by those who knew her. Sisters of St Joseph 1925 – 1926 p. 76

when going with her as companion to the city. We were waiting at the corner of the street near Mount St Post Office for a tram. A young woman came staggering along and at last reached and rested by the stone wall on the side of the footpath. Being young and inexperienced I naturally thought the woman was intoxicated, but Mother's quick eye detected something more serious. She said to me, 'come along, dear, and see what is wrong with this poor woman. On getting up to her we found the woman was very ill. Mother asked if she could do anything for her. The woman said if she could get to the chemist's nearby she knew what would relieve her. The three of us then went to the chemist's where the patient was attended to and we waited until she felt better. This act of charity on mother's part made a life-long impression on me.'<sup>2</sup>

Mary MacKillop's loving was not ethereal. It was practical and down-to-earth. Another Sister who knew her, Sr M Borgia described her as 'a woman of good, sound commonsense.' Love without sound commonsense is in danger of being self-serving love, a love which is about the self rather than about the other, the antithesis of what Mary wanted for herself or for her Sisters. One Sister remembers that if a Sister had a particular talent for singing, for example, a gift she could readily share with others in a loving way, Mary would say to such a Sister, 'you sing very nicely dear, but that is nothing to be proud of, only something to be grateful for'.<sup>3</sup>

As Jesus showed us in his own life, it is not enough to just think about love, or sing about love, or to write poems about love. Love has to be expressed. Love has to be actioned, even though that action may take us into suffering and even death, laying down one's life for one's friends. Jesus love: the greatest love of all. Echoing the words of St Paul in today's reading, then, we celebrate that Mary MacKillop enriched God, in speech and knowledge of every kind. We give thanks for love made incarnate in Mary MacKillop through the graces and gifts that were given to her. Today we celebrate again her life, her commitment to a loving God, her faithfulness to that God and to the poor of God. May we be inspired to continue to love one another in practical ways, as our gifts and energies inspire us to do, so that through us also the love and the faithfulness of our God will shine through us to others in our own time.

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<sup>2</sup> Op cit p. 70

<sup>3</sup> Op cit p. 80

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