

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; St Joseph's Chapel  
Mackillop College  
27 October 2009

Just over two months ago, a great deal of effort was made to recognise the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Mary Mackillop, who, hopefully will be acknowledged as Australia's first saint in the not too distant future.

One of Mary's sisters, Lexie, belonged to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. As I understand, Lexie was never a member of the community here in Hobart, but Mary clearly had a close association with the other congregation of religious sisters. On 18 October 1897, when Mary Mackillop was travelling between Australia and New Zealand, the ship called into Hobart for a very short stop-over, and Mary came down to St Canice to spend her time with the Sisters. Apparently the ship berthed in Hobart at 11.00am, and Mary travelled to Sandy Bay by taxi, at a cost of 4/-. She chose a cheaper form of transport to return to the ship, at 7pm, paying just 1/- on the tram.

I am not sure whether Mary would have been able to see quite this far from the wharf at Hobart, and I am certain that she would never have dreamed that a college would be named after her in the way that has happened here with Mackillop College here at Mornington. It is a fitting occasion to recall the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of this lovely chapel, and to use the moment for the blessing of the sculpture of Mary herself, a further contribution from Mr Bernie Tarr.

In her recently published book "In the Spirit of St. Joseph" the Australian Sister, Mary Cresp, gives some very interesting information about other religious congregations which carry the name "Sisters of St. Joseph". They have their origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France, and Fr. Julian Tennison Woods, would have been familiar with their work from his earlier days in Europe.

These congregations spread into other parts of the world, notably into the United States and into Canada in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and they have made a notable contribution to religious life and religious education there as well.

In every instance, the inspiration comes from the example of the life of St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus. Nazareth, the home village of the Holy Family, at the time that Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived there, would have been a community of perhaps 300-400 people, living in a very isolated situation, not in close contact with neighbouring towns very much at all.

It is also believed that Joseph, who has traditionally been spoken of as a carpenter, would in fact have been multi-skilled, capable of constructing much larger buildings, and also of working a small holding of land as well.

When changes came in religious life, in great part due to the new approach arising from the Ignatian tradition, and the inspiration of St. Ignatius of Loyola, there was a strong desire to create a new emphasis on living a more ordinary life, and for the religious to live closer to the people. They were to be more closely in touch with people who were very much part of the agrarian society of the time.

There can be no surprise that Julian Tennison-Woods, and Blessed Mary Mackillop would have been very attracted to the spirituality of the person of St. Joseph, and the style of the Sisters of St. Joseph already in existence in other parts of the world. Again, there was an emphasis on being practical, and on being part of the local community.

This spirit of unity was very important to Mary herself, and one of the issues which arose in her battles with Bishop Shiel in Adelaide was around her unwillingness to have a two-tiered system in the congregation, with choir sisters and lay sisters.

In both the readings for this Mass today, there is a strong emphasis on the place of God's love in our lives, our love for God, but more importantly, God's love for us. In one of her writings, Mary encourages us to refuse nothing to God's love.

It is important again today that we are reminded of the wonderful example of St. Joseph, whose example inspired Blessed Mary Mackillop in the way that has become so obvious to us in recent times. The sculpture will also continue to remind us, and in particular the students of this College her charisms, and her place in our history, long into the future.