

Saint Mary of the Cross (MacKillop), Year B

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith? So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?" It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

(Matthew 6:25-34)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- A cubit was a measure of length used by many ancient cultures. It was based on the length of an arm from the elbow to the top of the middle finger and was 18 inches or 457 millimetres. The word itself is derived from the Latin *cubitum*, for 'elbow'.
- Solomon was the son of the great King David and he ruled after David's death. His reign represents the high point of Israel's history, a time of peace and prosperity. He was renowned for his great wisdom and wealth. After his death, civil war erupted, and ultimately his kingdom was divided into two: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.
- St Mary of the Cross is Australia's first saint, canonised by Pope Benedict XVI on the 17 October 2010.
- Sister Mary of the Cross was the religious name chosen by Mary MacKillop when she dedicated herself to God.
- Australia has two patrons. One is St Mary of the Cross, who we celebrate today. The other is Our Lady Help of Christians, whose feast day occurs on 24 May.

EXPLORING THE WORD

As you know, the gospel texts for Year B normally come from the Gospel of Mark, but this week a text from Matthew is used because of the special feast that is commemorated today, 8 August, which may or may not fall on a Sunday. This particular text from Matthew is chosen because it speaks so well to St Mary of the Cross and her overarching vision for her ministry: that God would provide what was needed for her important work, especially among the rural poor, to thrive and prosper. In this text, Matthew reminds his community that they should not overly concern themselves with the material world. To do so is to be distracted from those things that are far more important. 'Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well.' If God provides all that is needed for the birds of the air and the flowers of the fields, surely he will provide everything for those who follow the way of truth and faith. Excessive concern for material comfort, wealth or splendour will not ensure salvation. Only trusting in God and setting our hearts on the kingdom will achieve this lofty result. Do not be distracted by the things of the world!

- In what ways do you experience God providing all that you need?
- What inspiration to faith can be found in contemplating the wonders of God's creation?
- 'Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing!' At this point on your journey, how would you describe the purpose of life?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'What are the important things in your life? What do you 'set your heart on'?
- How easy or difficult do you find it to rely on God to provide all that you need? What is it that you really need?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were totally reliant on someone else? What were the circumstances? How did that make you feel? Share your reflections.
- How do you feel if you are not able to control what is happening around you?
- This week, make time to find a quiet space. Sit in the silence and surrender yourself to God. Allow God to fill all the needs you have.
- Use today's collect as your prayer this week:

O God, source of all goodness. You have shown us in Saint Mary a woman of faith, living by the power of the Cross. Teach us by her example to live the Gospel in changing times and to respect and defend the human dignity of all in our land.

