



Josephite Justice Office  
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## **The voice Mary MacKillop has given us** *The intersection of youth activism and faith in action*

The Feast of Mary MacKillop this year has come at a critical time in our country's history. So much of Australia is in lockdown, and we have had to find new ways, as Mary did, to reach out to those pushed to the edges of our community. This has proved both a gift and challenge to young Josephites who are joining together once more to honour this day, both as young Australians and committed Josephites. The lockdown has raised many barriers. Zoom and other online technology however have enabled new and dynamic ways of communicating.

"We are reminded once again of our call, to follow Christ in the spirit of Mary MacKillop," said Joelle Sassine, youth leader in Sydney. "Mary founded the Josephites at the young age of 24. "This time, and the challenges facing us as young people, have given us in this special year the space and passion to respond in new ways, as Mary did – impelled by our thirst for justice to become living expressions of the Gospel."

Youth activism has been proven to possess the powerful quality needed to intervene in unjust narratives and rewrite the story of our country in our time. "Mary MacKillop has shown us that Australia and the greater world are not defined by the inequalities running rampant in today's context. We can bring about change," Joelle insists. Her words have been echoed by other young leaders. "Helping us be more united as a community," said Dublin and Alice from Nundah, Queensland. "Impelling us to faith, action and courage," reiterated Trisha, Violet and Amelia from Milperra, NSW. Sophie from Gosford, NSW noted that "social justice must begin with youth", while Fadi and Mary from Lakemba, NSW stressed, "we know we can all make a difference." Personal faith and Mary MacKillop's spiritual guidance and lived experiences are powerful reminders to these young people that goodness can prevail.

The Josephite Action Group (JAG) members have been thrilled to rally support for The **Uluru Statement from the Heart** through the means of visual and written advocacy, campaigning among their peers, and lobbying for the support of local MPs. Marking the fourth anniversary of Uluru, JAG is inspired and driven by the unwavering momentum of this campaign, fighting for constitutional recognition for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **voice**. JAG believes it is called to journey with Indigenous communities as they work to reclaim their ancient sovereignty and inextricable connectedness and links to the land.

This interconnectedness of the whole of creation has found a home in the hearts of JAG members in the call they see to nurture our relationship with God's creation and with each other. The Catholic Bishops' Statement, **Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor**, released this week has already been taken on board.

"More and more regularly", said Joelle, "we are experiencing extreme temperatures, freak weather events as well as the slow but persistent degradation of natural environments, which has left creation heading for collapse. The physical and spiritual ramifications of these stresses are clear. **Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor** calls all of us as individuals, and our wider global community, to act against environmental injustices. As Josephites, we hope to work with the youth community to activate our democratic tools and fight for the future of Earth. The climate is changing and so must we."

Allied to these issues, JAG members are also devastated by the plight being suffered by refugees and those seeking asylum in this country. The **150 Days of Action** for people seeking refuge is calling Catholics across Australia to exhort the Morrison government to provide income

support; end temporary protection visas and ensure family reunion for refugees and asylum seekers in our land. “We do have a voice,” said Violet. “We must use it to achieve justice for our generation and the next.”

Josephite schools and young Josephite leaders across Australia have been inspired to articulate this call to action for unjustly marginalised refugees and asylum seekers in our community. Hashtags plastered across social media forums, video advocacy, petition signing and impassioned letter writing to local MP’s have been just some of the creative and practical ways the youth chose to re-contextualise Mary MacKillop’s earthy and timeless vocation. You too, can be a living example of the Gospel, by signing this [petition](#) and watching this [cross-generational dialogue](#) on how to get involved.

This Year of St Joseph could not have come at a more opportune time, as it has not only revealed the precarious nature of asylum seeker status, but given us the contemporary example of Joseph’s lived experience as a refugee.

Clearly, COVID-19 has served to exacerbate the conditions of the First and last peoples of this land, and reminded us once again of the climate crisis facing us.

“We are more than enthusiastic to actively engage in civic life and to be passionate global citizens,” finished Joelle. “And we are hugely grateful to Mary MacKillop for establishing the foundations and spirit for our active participation as young people – providing us with the steps to build on the Josephite legacy. We know that now is the time for us stand up and build a future that is just for all.”

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