

Over the next two Sundays there will be a hiatus in the normal Lectionary readings for the 19th and 20th Sundays in Ordinary Time. This is because in Australia the next two Sundays will be given over to the celebrations of the Solemnities of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary respectively. We shall not hear, what the remainder of the universal Church shall hear this Sunday, i.e. the continuation of chapter 6 of Saint John's gospel in which Jesus presents his theology of the Eucharist in the synagogue at Capernaum. I am not going to try and address two things at once, so we shall refer back to the gospels for the 19th Sunday and 20th Sundays in Ordinary Time during the homily for the 21st Sunday on this Sunday fortnight.

Mary's MacKillop's life, vocation and mission was so obviously based on the person and mission of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who came to her in word and sacrament. In the recent Sunday homilies, we have been reminding ourselves of the unsurpassed importance of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, present in Sacred Scripture. And the Lectionary readings from Sacred Scripture for Saint Mary's solemnity are beautifully chosen and completely congruent with her person, life and vocation. The first reading recalls the salvific visit of the great prophet Elijah to the Sidonian widow. The unnamed widow was an outsider in not just one, but two senses. Firstly she was not Jewish and secondly she no longer had a husband. Elijah pre-figures the way in which Jesus will go out to, minister to, and even call to mission those who were at or beyond the periphery of mainstream Jewish society.

The psalm, Psalm 62, tells of Mary's life-long yearning for God in sublime lyrical terms:

"O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.

My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water. ...

...

On my bed I remember you.

On you I muse through the night ..."

The second reading speaks of Saint Mary's person since Mary herself was "clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience."

The Alleluia verse before the gospel inclines us to imagine Mary standing at the foot of the cross with Our Lady and the other holy women, uniting the many sufferings she would endure with the passion of Christ himself. The gospel itself highlights in several ways the saintly way of abandonment to divine providence which Mary would follow. Finally, the gospel sees Jesus using metaphors which refer to the natural world of God's creation, as he so often does in his teaching and preaching in the explication of his theme. This reflects the priority which Mary's mission gave to the rural poor. A real and practical concern for the poor is a *sine qua non* of sanctity: it is always there in the lives of the saints, as it so clearly was in the life of Australia's first saint. It is also radically there in the lives of the persons who could become Australia's second and third saints, the Servant of God Eileen O'Connor, co-founder of Our Lady's Little Nurses for the Poor, and Charles O'Neill, the founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in New South Wales. Is it there sufficiently in our parish?

Mary's very person, life, vocation and mission so obviously embodies what has nourished her, namely the sacraments, the Eucharist and the Word of God present in Sacred Scripture, the latter forming the basis of her personal prayer, those principal hours of the Liturgy of the Hours which she prayed as a religious, and her devotional prayer (principally the Holy Rosary) which is itself based on Sacred Scripture.