

OUR OWN SAINT!

WITHOUT DOUBT, the biggest event in 2010 for the Church in Australia was the canonization of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop. We are still discovering the fuller significance of having our first Australian canonized saint, and still discovering what a characteristically Australian saintly person she was. Even though she lived more than a century ago she still inspires us and gives us heart as we encounter in present-day Australia very similar challenges to those she encountered.

This issue of *Compass* can be read as a reflection on Saint Mary and her way of living by faith and our contemporary efforts to do likewise. Cardinal Pell's homily during the thanksgiving Mass will suggest links with later articles.

Mary's well-documented concern for people who were missing out or suffering deprivation and neglect of any kind provides a link with the theme of justice and peace: 'There can be no peace without justice'.

Cardinal Pell recalls her capacity to forgive and even to love her enemies as we are instructed to do in Mth 5.44. Thus she can provide an inspiration for us as, with the encouragement of the Australian Bishops' statements in recent times, we grapple with the reality of violence in Australian society and the challenge to cultivate a culture of peace.

But peace, as we are discovering, is a very big theme: peace is intimately personal yet global as well, encompassing peace with the environment, with the whole of creation.

The reason why we call Mary of the Cross a saint rather than a philanthropist, as Cardinal Pell reminds us, is the fact that her life was centred on God, and her work for others was her way of responding to God's will. Her efforts for people were contemplation in action. Thus the articles in this issue that explore the contemplative tradition in Catholicism, marriage included, are able to find a *niche* in this issue.

As I write we are in the season of Advent, and I am reminded that at the time of the can-

onization there was much controversy, puzzlement and worse about the Catholic belief in miracles. Miracles, to some, seemed quite unfair—how nice for those few who received cures and other blessings, while the rest of the human race is left to suffer. If God could do that for some at the request of Mary MacKillop, what sort of God is it that leaves the rest of us to our fate?

The liturgies of Advent give a reply. John the Baptist seems to have expected a more spectacular Messiah to erupt into human history than Jesus turned out to be: Jesus was healing a few people, but he was a little low-key in John's estimation. And so John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he really was the one who was to come or should they wait for another. Jesus' reply was simply, 'Go and tell John what you see'. In other words, he instructed them, and through them John, to look for the signs—what he was doing showed that the time of the Messiah had begun.

And so in Advent the message is: with the birth of the Messiah we celebrate a massive leap forward in the realization of God's plan to establish his kingdom on earth. The kingdom of God is in our midst, and faith enables us to see the signs. But the kingdom grows like a mustard seed; it needs time to grow to be a big tree. As yet it is largely in the future, something promised, and we are asked to believe in that promise: 'Blessed is that person who does not lose faith in me'.

The miracles that are attributed to the intercession of Saint Mary of the Cross are to be understood in that way. They are signs, the beginnings of the realisation of God's ultimate will for humankind. Saint Mary MacKillop is in the action of promoting the kingdom. The fact that only a few miracles occurred is what we might expect, given that even Jesus himself cured only a few people, comparatively speaking. The kingdom of God is 'now' but is also 'not-yet'.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor.