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CANONIZATION DATE SET FOR AUSTRALIA'S 1ST SAINT

Cardinal Pell Calls Mary MacKillop a "Role Model"

SYDNEY, Australia, FEB. 19, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Church in Australia is celebrating as Benedict XVI announced that Blessed Mary MacKillop will soon be proclaimed as the country's first saint.

The news was confirmed this morning at an ordinary public consistory for the canonisation of blessed, which announced that Mother MacKillop and five others will be proclaimed saints on Oct. 17 in Rome.

Cardinal George Pell, the archbishop of Sydney, commented in a press statement that he was delighted with the news.

"Mary MacKillop stands at the heart of the Catholic tradition," he said. "She had great ability to forgive and showed immense loyalty not only to her fellow sisters but to the Church leadership which did not always treat her well."

"Yet Mary was a very normal person and a great role model for all Australians. Mary MacKillop is a very worthy saint for Australia, an important first for all of us," the cardinal added.

Australia's prime minister, Kevin Rudd, commented that the sainthood of Mother MacKillop is "deeply significant" and "an inspiration" for all Australians.

He called her "an extraordinary figure in Australian history" who, through her work in

education and attending to the needs of the poor, "changed the course of many young Australians lives."

"This is a deeply significant announcement for the five million Australians of Catholic faith, and for all Australians whether of Catholic faith or not," the prime minister said.

Founder

Mary MacKillop, born in Victoria in 1842, founded the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, which established schools and charitable organizations across Australia and was devoted to the care of orphans, neglected children, the homeless, sick and elderly. She died in 1909.

Pope John Paul II beatified Sister MacKillop in 1995, saying she embodied the best of Australia and its people.

He noted her "genuine openness to others, hospitality to strangers, generosity to the needy, justice to those unfairly treated, perseverance in the face of adversity, kindness and support to the suffering."

In 2008, Sister MacKillop was a key patron of the World Youth Day hosted by Sydney, Australia. Ahead of the international youth event, the government honored the nun by featuring her on a collector's coin.

The Archdiocese of Sydney revealed that Harvest Pilgrimages has been appointed the Official Canonisation Tour Operator by the Sisters of St Joseph, the Archdiocese of Sydney and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference responsible for managing the movement of pilgrims to Rome.

Harvest's Managing Director, Philip Ryall, is preparing for the likelihood of several thousand pilgrims who will travel to Rome for the event.

"This will be without doubt one of the great moments in our nation's history. What a privilege to assist the faithful to be there and experience this with their own eyes," he said

in a statement released by the archdiocese.

As the Canonisation Travel Office, Harvest will also be responsible for the coordination of canonisation tickets for Australian pilgrims into a specially partitioned area in St. Peter's Square.