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Julian Tenison Woods: a Life by Mother Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

Canonization Edition. Introduced and annotated by Margaret Press. St Pauls 2010. 246 pages with Index. ISBN 9781921472442.

The reproduction of this book allows us to take a fresh view of Mother Mary MacKillop, this time reading her through her own writings on the extraordinary life of her co-founder Fr Julian Tenison Woods. Mother Mary may well have intended the words on the page to be a story about her collaborator, but now a century later, her account of Fr Woods allows us to see into her own heart and mind, form a new picture of the times in which this unusual pair worked so tirelessly, and get a sense of emerging Australia and in particular the Australian Catholic church before the introduction of the 1917 Code of Canon Law (see page 194). It also gives a generous picture of Woods himself, a view which not all have held of him.

What does the book bring to today's reader. It offers a close acquaintance with a man of extraordinary talent though not always good fortune. There is his devotion to things of the church, the choice of vocation over marriage, theological studies mixed with fossil hunting (they are different disciplines!), financial difficulties, his role in the establishment of catholic education and then maintaining its standards in the role of school inspector, and his collaboration with Mary in founding the order. Throughout there are interesting snippets of factors in the life of faith that are worth recalling. There is the many years delay in the visit of a bishop for confirmation at Penola, the help given by a prominent Jewish leader when catholic doors were closed, the outrage, prayer and need for atonement felt across the community when a ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament. Why mention the 1917 Code above: on page 194 is mention of Fr Woods preaching and its attraction to adherents of other denominations. There was a fertile ecumenism in 19th century Australia, not fully appreciated, and here is a snapshot of it in action. Unfortunately the new canonical code forbade Catholics participating in interdenominational worship, and also the participation of other Christians in catholic prayer. The book contains reminders of what was lost and took so long to be regained.

The book is a must for anyone interested in the Sisters of St Joseph, Mother Mary and of course Fr Woods. It is also of value to historians of early Australia and its many colonies as well as to church historians. In this it is also of interest to senior high school studies in religion and religious figures in their time. Thanks must go to the energetic Sr Margaret Press for once again laying before us something of Australian life, culture and faith.

Gerard Moore

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