



Dear Friends,

Mary is the focus of our May edition of *Mission and Spirituality News*. I love Mary because I identify with her uncertainty and I'm inspired by her faithful discipleship. She's like a compass that guides my little boat through the unexpected joys and challenges of life.

One of the fondest memories of my school days was the May Day procession. Six hundred young women would process in pairs through the grounds of the convent singing: "Oh Mary we crown thee with blossoms today, Queen of the Angels and Queen of the May." I can remember the sweet smell of those flowers as we placed our bouquets at the foot of her statue and the stirring voices as we all sang in unison.

The image is old fashioned and yesterday, but the experience was so beautiful and so moving that it stayed with us.

Those young school girls who sang innocently about Mary as Queen of the May grew into women who understood first hand how to 'run' to their cousins in need and provide practical assistance. Many of those girls grew to understand that motherhood was glorious but that it also meant being challenged and disappointed when it felt as though 'a sword will pierce your own soul'. We all came to realise that we were called to encourage, to prompt, even to push our children into adulthood despite the protests and frustrations. Mary at the foot of the Cross is every mother's darkest fear: to witness the death of your own child. I walked on those crisp May Day processions with girls who have known such grief. I've seen them almost crushed and undone by the weight of grief and the inexplicable injustice of it all. I've seen their struggle to find a thread of hope. In these moments, these women are our models of faith.

In the darkest of times we watch as they look for the threads of tomorrow; the birth of another child, the wedding, the birth of a grandchild, the birth of the Church. It's not about the mother it's always about the other. Mary is always pointing to her son.

I invite you to join in the Mary First Disciple National eConference on May 18th. Fr Francis Moloney SDB will be the key note speaker. It will be a wonderful faith formation experience. It's not too late to register as an individual or to form a group. Go to www.bbi.catholic.edu.au for all relevant information. We have 272 registered sites across Australia and the world. If you register you go into the draw to win a pilgrimage for two to the canonisation of Mary MacKillop.

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