

Australian saint-to-be tweets from beyond the grave

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A bronze statue of Mary MacKillop. An Australian nun has taken to Twitter on behalf of saint-in-waiting MacKillop, bringing the late sister's messages of hope and forgiveness to a new audience a century after she died.

An Australian nun has taken to Twitter on behalf of saint-in-waiting Mary MacKillop, bringing the late sister's messages of hope and forgiveness to a new audience a century after she died.

Annette Arnold has been microblogging as @stmarymackillop since late December, when [Pope Benedict XVI](#) put MacKillop on course to become Australia's first saint by recognising her second miracle.

"I just kind of take on her persona I suppose," Sister Arnold told AFP,

saying it was "absolutely critical" that the Roman Catholic Church embrace new methods of communication.

"Mary MacKillop was an incredible communicator, our archives just have hundreds and hundreds of her letters," she said.

"I just think if she were still here today she would be on email, and I think given her passion for her work she'd probably be out there on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) as well -- they're modern means of communication."

Melbourne-born MacKillop, who died in 1909, was a pioneering educator and social reformer who founded Arnold's Sisters of St. Joseph order.

Arnold tweets the latest news about MacKillop's journey to sainthood, or sends followers quotes from the Order's vast collection of her writings.

"I think Twitter's really good at the moment because people are really keen to know what's happening -- is she going to be canonised, what's the date and stuff like that," she said.

MacKillop also has a Facebook page which has been running for 18 months, attracting 1,300 followers.

MacKillop, revered as a national icon by Australia's five million Catholics, passed the first stage to sainthood when she was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1995 for curing a woman of terminal leukaemia.

The second miracle, in which a woman who prayed to her was said to have been healed of inoperable lung cancer in the 1990s, opens the way for the Vatican to make MacKillop Australia's first saint.

"My birthday today... if I were still on earth I would be 168 years old! God is good and has done wonders!" she tweeted, via Arnold, on January 15.

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