

**Bishop Michael Joseph McKenna's first address to the Diocese
at his
Mass of Ordination and Installation as
Eighth Bishop of Bathurst
June 26th 2009**

The late John Shanley, legendary in his own lifetime as parish priest of Lakes Entrance, had a large sign in the sacristy where he vested for Mass. It read:

*Lord, grant me the unction
to function with gumption
at this point of junction
of the Body of Christ.*

Not a bad prayer for a priest getting ready to say Mass. Not a bad prayer for a bishop beginning his ministry. Not a bad prayer for all of us in this Church of the Central West, the Diocese of Bathurst, as we turn the page to read and write and live a new chapter in our story.

I'll begin by acknowledging the three Patricks.

First, St Patrick, patron of our Diocese. As a youth, Patrick was sold into slavery in Ireland. He lost all he had: his freedom and even the shirt off his back. But in his poverty he discovered who God is and that he belonged to God and because of that he was going to gain everything. St Patrick, pray for us!

Second, Bishop Patrick Dougherty, who came to Bathurst more than a quarter of a century ago to give his life for God's people here. His spirit of prayer and loving service has borne good fruit in the unity and hope that is here among the priests and the people. The Church has benefited enormously from the gifts of wisdom that God has entrusted to Bishop Pat and I would hope that I could call on that wisdom in the days and years ahead.

Third, we also thank God for Father Patrick O'Regan, whose selfless and sensitive ministry has guided the Diocese through this time between bishops. May the Lord of the Vineyard bless him a hundredfold and more. I know already how much I shall rely on him in the future, just as I have in these past few weeks.

Father Pat has already thanked our visitors for coming along today and I simply want to repeat that. Everyone here is equally important and equally welcome and if we had the time I'd greet each of you by name. But since that's not possible, let me just mention a few.

I'll start with my family, because that's where I started. My mother Marie (here this morning) and my late father Max gave me life, gave me love, gave me faith. They passed on values that guide my way still. And, in addition to food and shelter and education, they gave me something else that not everyone gets in this world: ten brothers and sisters: one now in heaven and the rest here with us today, along with spouses and children; and many of our uncles, aunts and cousins. *I thank my God each time I think of them.*

I belong to another big family, the Catholic Church. The universal Church is very big. She reaches across the five continents of our planet, back through the centuries and into heaven. The whole Church was praying with us today in this Mass and is always with us when we join in building God's kingdom. On earth, this community is not a confederation, nor a corporation. It is a mystery of communion lived out in flesh and blood - in other words, in the difficulties and opportunities of human life in all its intricate reality. We warmly welcome Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto among us as a brother, but also as the representative of the Successor of Peter, now Pope Benedict XVI, whose ministry protects this communion of the Church on earth. The Church of Bathurst is not alone: we belong to something greater.

To Cardinal George Pell and all the bishops who ordained me: I hope that we can be brothers in the work entrusted to us. Brothers can have their differences, but there is something unbreakable between them that can make them accept the inevitability of love.

Bishop Jeremiah Coffey was a co-consecrator today and in him I welcome the priests and people of Sale, the diocese to which I belonged until an hour ago. Although I spent more years working outside the diocese than in it, it was there that I first learnt what Jerry would call "the art and craft of priesthood." For better or worse, Sale will have its impact on Bathurst.

And now, to the priests and people of this Diocese of Bathurst: thank you for your great welcome to me. The wonderful celebrations that you have organized today are a sign of your love for the Church and your willingness to work with me. You have made it clear that you want a bishop. I am willing to take it on. But I am only a bishop.

There are some things that a bishop can do and some things he can't do. There are things that only he can do. So he must do them, or else they will not be done.

The same may be said for every member of the Church. There are some things that only you can do, so you must do them, or else they will not be done.

I like the term that Pope Benedict has been using lately: co-responsibility. The mission of the Church is entrusted not just to the bishop or the clergy or the religious. It belongs to all of us, each playing his part or hers, not blaming others when things go wrong, but always asking "what can I do to make it better?"

When I was ordained a priest, the same year Bishop Dougherty came to Bathurst, I was struck by some lines by the Australian poet A.D. Hope. He was talking about the poet's vocation: it seemed to me his words applied also to the priest's: now I think they could be applied to every Christian vocation:

*As well as he can, the poet, blind, betrayed
Distracted by the groaning mill, among
The jostle of slaves, the clatter, the lash of trade,
Taps the pure source of song...*

The words of St Paul that we heard in the second reading today resonate with that:

*In every way afflicted but not restrained
In difficulties but not despairing
Persecuted but not deserted
Cast down but not perishing
Always the dying of Jesus in our body bearing
That the life of Jesus in our body be shown as well...*

We always want our troubles sorted now so that we can, as they say, "get on with our lives." We always want the obstacles the Church faces to be quickly removed so that we can "get on with our mission." But, perhaps, it's in these very troubles and obstacles that we discover the life and mission that God is giving us.

Last week, I made a retreat at the Cistercian Abbey in Tarrawarra, outside Melbourne. It's in the area that suffered the terrible bushfires last February. Part of the monks' farm and livestock were burnt, but the house and chapel were spared. I remembered the first time I went there, years ago. One day, I asked the late Father Finbarr, then the guestmaster, to tell me under which title was Mary invoked for the protection of the Abbey. He replied "Our Lady of Tarrawarra, of course."

I'd like to conclude these remarks by placing our Diocese under the care of Mary. May she protect us from our foolishness and our fears. Seat of Wisdom, Model of Faith, pray for us. Keep our eyes fixed on your Son, our salvation and our lasting peace. Our Lady of the Central West, pray for us.

