

Bishop Michael McKenna's opening remarks at the Pontifical Requiem Mass for the late Bishop Patrick Dougherty

We gather here in this Mass of Christian Burial for Patrick Dougherty, who has been our bishop, our brother, our friend.

Each one here will miss Bishop Dougherty in his or her own way, but in sharing our sorrow we can find consolation and hope.

Every Eucharistic celebration is a common act of thanksgiving. Blessed Mary of the Cross said that "gratitude is the memory of the heart." This morning, we remember Patrick and the ways he touched our lives. We give thanks to God for having sent him among us.

At his installation as seventh Bishop of Bathurst in this Cathedral twenty seven years ago, he said "I am Patrick, a sinner..." He was quoting the opening words of St Patrick's Confession, and making them his own. Like all who come close to Christ, Patrick Dougherty was well aware of his weaknesses and failings. He relied on the mercy of God and the prayers of his people. Today, as he wished, we offer this Mass for the forgiveness of his sins.

The Dean of the Cathedral, Father James Cutcliffe, has welcomed our visitors and, on behalf of the people and priests of our Diocese, I endorse that. I would like to take this moment to acknowledge all that James has done for Bishop Dougherty, culminating in organizing these funeral rites.

Now that the priests and bishops have arrived, it is time to greet them. I thank the Metropolitan of our Province, Cardinal Pell, for joining us today. The President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Wilson, regrets that he is unable to be here, but is united with us in prayer.

Bishop Dougherty used to refer to our local church as the "diocesan family." He also knew that we were part of a much bigger family, the Catholic Church, whose communion on earth is protected by the ministry of the Successor of Peter. We are most grateful for the presence today of the Holy Father's representative in Australia, Archbishop Lazzarotto and I would ask His Excellency to speak to us now.