

By Bishop Pat Power

Our seminary class had a special bond with Doc Dougherty, as we then knew him, because our three years at St Columba's Seminary from 1959 to 1961 coincided with our young professor's three years of teaching there. Pat was less than ten years older than I was as the youngest in the class and I think four of the class were older than he. He was something of a "big brother" to us. Interestingly, the hymn which we sang tonight *Alone with none but thee, my God* is attributed to St Columba.

Pat taught us over the time Latin, Logic, Italian and History of Philosophy. Bear in mind that he was less than five years ordained and with a doctorate in theology, he was being asked to teach philosophy! Actually he did pretty well, but I must admit he was only a couple of textbook pages ahead of us in History of Philosophy. I am sure that the challenge of college life was added to by the fact that the rector of the college was Monsignor Charlie Dunne whom we all held in fear and trepidation. Having said all that, Father Dougherty provided a bridge between staff and students and over fifty years later members of our class have warm and positive memories of our kind and smiling mentor.

Patrick Dougherty had completed his own seminary studies at Propaganda Fide College in Rome. One of my Canberra-Goulburn friends, Hilton Roberts was a few years behind Pat at Propaganda and has fond memories of Pat as Head Prefect in 1954 in a position where he was a great help to the younger students.

After ordination the young Father Dougherty began his doctoral studies in Rome as part of which he wrote his thesis on Mother Mary Potter, the founder of the Little Company of Mary. Later on, drawing on the thesis, he published a very readable biography of Mother Mary Potter. Bishop Dougherty maintained a long and loyal friendship with the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, one which was mutually enriching. It is significant that the present Congregational Leader in Australia, Sister Jennifer Burrow and other members of the Order are here this evening.

At the end of 1958, just before returning to Australia, Father Dougherty was invited by Cardinal Gilroy to accompany him into the Conclave which elected Pope John XXIII following the death of Pope Pius XII. I wonder if he realised what a momentous choice the Cardinals had made in electing such a wonderful Pope at the age of 78.

Just three years after leaving Rome to take up duties in Springwood, Father Dougherty was recalled to his Roman Alma Mater, Propaganda Fide College to become Vice-Rector for the next eight years. This meant that Patrick Dougherty spent just three years of a twenty year period in his homeland Australia. Pat had the privilege and joy of being in Rome for the whole period of the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965. It must be said at the same time, that the aftermath of Vatican II was a difficult time in seminaries around the world. Lots of things were being questioned by students as indeed they were by their contemporaries in the secular world. Propaganda was no exception and I am led to believe that the Australian students were in the forefront in challenging assumptions which were previously accepted without question. It is my understanding that Pat was caught in the crossfire of what was a tough situation. I think he suffered a great deal but in typical fashion without bitterness.

If I were asked to sum up Pat's life, I would describe it in terms of his kindness to all and his deep love for the priesthood and for individual priests. You have already heard so many examples of that in his time as Bishop of Bathurst, so there is no need for me to go over that ground. When he returned to Australia, he came to Canberra to be the assistant to Archbishop Thomas Cahill who was secretary of the Episcopal Conference. Father Dougherty was charged with putting the secretariat of the Conference on a more organised footing. But he was no mere bureaucrat and delighted in giving whatever pastoral service he could to the parishes and religious communities in the Archdiocese and being a true brother to us priests. As our auxiliary bishop from 1976 to 1983, he continued in a new capacity to provide loving and grace-filled pastoral care.

His kindness and pastoral interest in others was always clearly evident in his life. He related well with people of all ages. He was loved by the "oldies" always approaching them with humility and respect. He was very much at home with little children in all kinds of situations. In 1971, one of his altar boys, Tom Brennan, aged 11 developed a serious illness which led to his death within a few months. Tom's mother, Mary Brennan, remembers with deep gratitude the way Father Dougherty helped Tom and the family prepare for his death at such a young age. Mary and Pat have kept in touch over the years and Mary communicated with and prayed for Bishop Dougherty in his time of dying. I know that story would be one among many relating to our dear friend who showed such kindness in ways known only to God.

On my last two visits to Pat Dougherty here in Bathurst, I also travelled to Orange to visit another Pat. One of my childhood heroes, was Pat Ford, who was the Australian and British Empire lightweight boxing champion in the 1950s. It turns out that Pat Ford's boxing career was helped by a number of priests of this diocese connected with CYMS (Catholic Young Men's Society) in Orange.

Both Pats were about the same age. Both men are beautiful human beings with great courage and tenacity. (Pat Ford is still living, incidentally). Both are men of deep faith and simple goodness. Most of all, both have lived out Jesus' great commandment "Love one another as I have loved you."

(Bishop)Pat Power
Bathurst Cathedral

7 September 2010

By Sr Mary Comer, rsj
Congregational Leader - Perthville Josephites

Bishop Patrick Dougherty has been a constant in my life since he arrived in the Diocese.

Having worked in Diocesan positions during all of the time he has been in Bathurst, and served on various committees, I have had reason to meet with him in a number of arenas.

The person I encountered was a somewhat shy and very pastoral man, a non-judgemental, just and compassionate person, who could and would listen, who would give advice if it was sought and who would ask for advice if he considered he needed a wider perspective or another side to an issue under consideration.

He held his people in mind, and no doubt in prayer, and many, over the years, have received personal letters from him on occasions of loss, illness, celebration and achievement.

Visits to the sick, those in hospitals and nursing homes, or those who were house bound, were regular parts of his less public ministry.

He was a very intelligent and well read man, who studied issues that confronted him and was prepared to give matters under consideration due thought before making a decision...in some ways tough decision making seemed to be what was the hardest part of the role for him...as it is for us all...and he appeared to delay on that occasionally. I appreciated the support he gave in various ways over the years that Centacare was in its infancy and subsequent growth years. In more recent years, in other areas, there have been some challenging issues to negotiate, and while there may not have always been initial agreement on occasions, there was a mutual respect which contributed to the good of all in the long term.

His sermons were studied and well prepared, and he had obviously kept the people concerned on the occasion well in mind, as he prepared his input. For many of the sisters' Jubilee celebrations, he would often compare the person to one of the biblical characters that he, after consideration of the individual person, had seen some similarity of circumstance or virtue in. And there were times when some of the more cheeky of us would joke about which character it might be on that occasion! The bigger issue was that he gave the time and thought to the individuals concerned and that was appreciated.

For us, as a Diocesan Congregation, he shared our celebrations and our sorrows, was available for consultation if necessary, did not impose his conditions on us, would arrive like clockwork for afternoon tea at St. Anne's on Christmas Day...and was part of the Josephite family... a far different role to some of his earlier predecessors.

This year we had the privilege of having Bishop Dougherty come weekly to celebrate Mass at St. Anne's Health Care facility for the residents there. We had the benefit of his input each week and his relaxed presence at morning tea afterwards. He was faithful to this mass until he could literally stand no longer.

Bishop Dougherty was a humble man, who lived his life with an utter simplicity and detachment amidst a society which is so opposite to that. His material possessions were few and he gave yearly generous donations to charities from his own resources.

He got joy out of very simple things, like a box of chocolates, and his eyes would light up at the sight of chocolate cake, or cream cake or chocolate crackles. It's been said that he enjoyed the post confirmation parties more than the candidates...and even wrote to some of them afterwards. There was a sense of humour tucked away amongst his other characteristics.

For religious, who aim for simplicity of life, humility, compassion and a complete faith and trust in God, he was certainly a model. His courage and acceptance of his diagnosis, so early in his retirement, and his walking the journey of illness, without a hint of complaint, has been truly edifying.

As I went to pray the Divine Office a couple of days after his death, the beginning hymn, which he would have prayed many times, jumped out at me. For me it summarises his life stance. It reads:

Alone with none but thee, my God,
I journey on my way;
What need I fear, when thou art near,
O King of night and day?
More safe am I within thy hand,
Than if a host did round me stand.

My destined time is fixed by thee,
And death doth know his hour,
Did warriors strong around me throng,
They could not stay his power;
No walls of stone can man defend,
When thou thy messenger dost send.

My life I yield to thy decree,
And bow to thy control
In peaceful calm, for from thine arm
No power can wrest my soul.
Could earthly omens e'er appal
A man that heeds the heavenly call.

The child of God can fear no ill,
His chosen dread no foe;
We leave our fate with thee and wait
Thy bidding when to go.
Tis not from chance our comfort springs,
Thou art our trust , O King of kings.

My earliest recollection of Bishop Dougherty is from some 50 years ago, from the time when I was an altar boy at St Joseph's Parish, Enfield in Sydney. The Bishop's brother, Fr John Dougherty, was an assistant priest at the parish. On this particular morning we were walking to the sacristy to get ready for Mass when a tall, distinguished looking priest came out of the presbytery, gave us a cheery wave and headed off for the day.

Who was that, I asked? John Dougherty replied that it was his brother, Fr Patrick, who was visiting for a few days. I thought nothing more about it and of course did not realise that 30 years later I would be working for that priest, now a bishop, in the Diocese of Bathurst.

Memories are individual and are also collective and in speaking this evening, this short reflection is in a sense a collective memory of how the staff of Chancery remembers the Bishop, for some, their boss for over 25 years.

We had more opportunity than most to enjoy the interaction and enriching experience of working for a person who in himself was humble, caring, just, compassionate and had an innate sense of wisdom. He was non-judgemental and accepted people as they were.

Having said that, it must be appreciated that the Bishop also had a strong sense of the position of Bishop and the dignity of the office of Bishop.

For the staff in chancery, there were many enjoyable moments with the Bishop when he shared morning or afternoon tea with us. These occasions were more enjoyable if it was celebrating a birthday and from the Bishop's point of view, even more so if cake, cream and other goodies were available.

He would often liken our 'gatherings', to use that word, to a big family gathering, and enjoyed listening, sometimes I felt with a degree of amazement, to the tales of domestic family life that would swirl around the table. He would join in, had a great sense of humour, all the more when he struggled to remember the name to go with the face, a comment on his secretary's dogs or querying Fr Delaney's health or holiday plans.

He enjoyed talking about the football, rugby league that is and looked forward when he was able, to watching the matches telecast on the weekend. If he had a favourite team, he never let on, always commenting on the good play of all teams. The Bishop was always too fair to be a partisan football supporter .

He enjoyed watching the State of Origin games and certainly one year **learnt that to schedule confirmation on** the same night as a third match in the series when it was tied at one all, was not acceptable.

Thereafter, among the first dates entered into the Episcopal diary for the new year were the dates for the three State of Origin matches.

I suspect for the Bishop these were minute interludes from the constant demands and pressures of the role of Bishop.

Sometimes on a Friday afternoon, when it was quieter and the pressure of work seemingly less demanding and not many around, the Bishop would linger over afternoon tea and talk about his days in the seminary, his time in Rome, about how he had a VW when he was in Rome and would head off on his annual leave driving around Europe, about issues facing the Church, about growing up with his family in Sydney and about life in general.

Those fortunate to be present were always struck by the insight of his comments, how thoughtful they were and how wide ranging his knowledge and these occasions provided just that brief glimpse of Patrick Dougherty, rather than Bishop Dougherty.

In seeking comment for this brief reflection, one member of staff said to me that over the years we had helped humanise the bishop. Possibly we did. It is more probable that Patrick Dougherty always had

those basic values that led him to commit his life to the Church. He mellowed over the years and more of the basic Patrick Dougherty flowed into the role of Bishop Dougherty.

As staff, we were aware that Bishop Dougherty was assiduous in his care and concern for all others, for their spiritual health, for those suffering ill-health and bereavement, for those in less fortunate circumstances. The care and concern, the justice and compassion exercised brought the peace of Christ to countless people.

May Bishop Dougherty now rest in that peace.

I feel totally inadequate to speak about Bishop Dougherty who was a very humble and deeply spiritual man whose witness and example were a source of inspiration to all in the Diocese.

While Bishop Dougherty was Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn, on 8th September 1983 he was appointed 7th Bishop of Bathurst. That day was the feast of the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary so it is fitting that we celebrate the requiem today. He had great devotion to Mary, indeed a unique relationship with her.

Today a number of priests who were in the same year in the seminary as Pat Dougherty - 33 of us ordained that year - are here with us today.

I have a vivid memory which I wish to share with you of what Bishop Dougherty did during the installation ceremony here in the Cathedral. He walked over to the statue of Mary over there, knelt down and prayed to her. That was a great witness of this relationship with Mary.

18 years ago Bishop Patrick asked me to be his full time Vicar General. As an example of his concern for the priests, religious and laity he asked me to live alone and be available to others at all times in case they did not wish to go through any formal Chancery Office procedure. That proved to be quite fruitful.

Bishop Pat was gracious to all - priests, religious and laity. He was available, approachable and compassionate. He was a priest and Bishop with a tremendous love of God and people.

He never made any decisions affecting the diocese unless he knew that most of the priests were in favour of the decision. As a result, visiting priests and particularly the priests who gave the annual clergy retreat always remarked on the great sense of unity among the priests - yes, no sign of polarisation.

Bishop Pat had a great love of his people and visited hundreds in their own homes, particularly those suffering from illness or bereavement.

Nearly 2 years ago, illness, extremely acute sugar diabetes, forced his resignation as Bishop of Bathurst. Then came times in hospital, then lung cancer, and finally a time at St Catherine's Hostel. There under the loving care of Dr Gilroy and the staff he concelebrated Mass, prayed the rosary and breviary, and one hour daily before the Blessed Sacrament until he was confined to bed and given Anointing of the Sick by Bishop McKenna and died really peacefully on 30th August.

May he rest in peace.