

On The Centenary of St Carthage's Cathedral

PASTORAL LETTER OF THE MOST REVEREND
GEOFFREY JARRETT, BISHOP OF LISMORE



To the Clergy, Religious and Faithful of The Diocese

I write this Letter to commemorate a notable milestone in the story of the Church in our Diocese: the Centenary of the Opening and Blessing of St Carthage's Cathedral on 18th August, 1907. It is a fitting moment for us to recall this great achievement of our forbears in the faith and the extraordinary courage of their leader, Jeremiah Doyle, the first Bishop of Grafton and Lismore. It is also an opportunity for us to look afresh at the meaning and significance of the Cathedral in the religious and spiritual life of a diocesan Church and to seek renewed inspiration and resolve for the future.

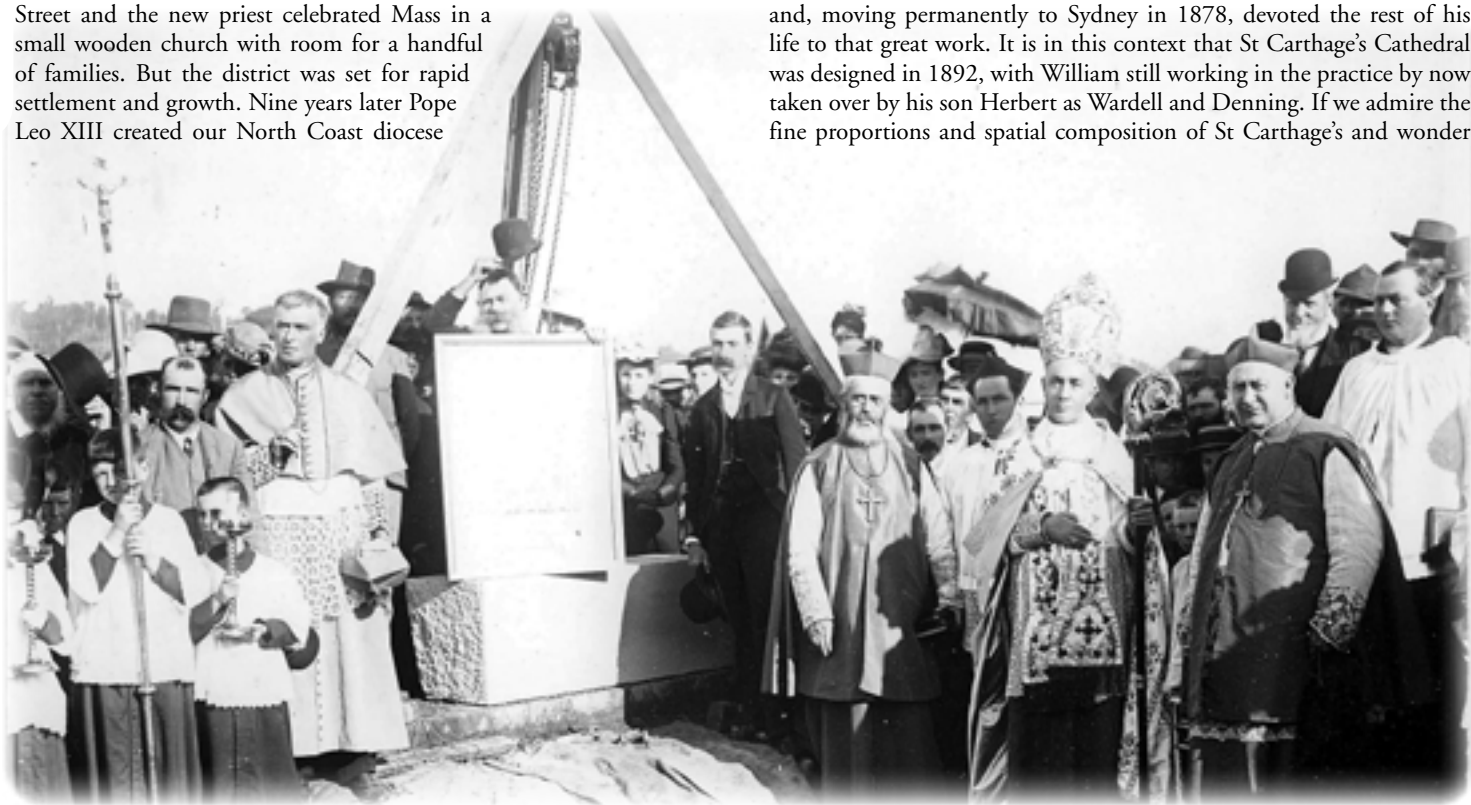
Jeremiah Doyle, the Bishop

Father Doyle, newly ordained from All Hallows College in Dublin, arrived in the colony of New South Wales in January, 1875. Penniless and a stranger, he had come to join the clergy of the Diocese of Armidale. In 1878 he was assigned to the distant Richmond River district. At that time there were few roads or bridges, the bullock teams bogged down in Molesworth Street and the new priest celebrated Mass in a small wooden church with room for a handful of families. But the district was set for rapid settlement and growth. Nine years later Pope Leo XIII created our North Coast diocese

and Dean Doyle, as he had become, was named its first Bishop. By 1892 his travels north and south had consolidated the Catholic communities with churches and schools and the time came to establish Lismore as the See City. The plans for a Cathedral were drawn up.

Herbert Wardell, the Architect

Bishop Doyle made a wise choice in commissioning Herbert S. Wardell to design St Carthage's. His father was the English architect William Wilkinson Wardell (1823-1899), who had emigrated to Melbourne in 1858. William was a friend of the 'father' of Gothic Revival architecture in England, Augustus Welby Pugin and like him an enthusiastic convert to the Catholic Church. Within that strong influence and collaboration, W. W. Wardell had already designed some thirty churches in and about London and upon arrival in Australia was almost immediately commissioned to design St Mary's Cathedral, Hobart and St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. After the disastrous fire of 1865, Wardell was also appointed the architect of the new St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney and, moving permanently to Sydney in 1878, devoted the rest of his life to that great work. It is in this context that St Carthage's Cathedral was designed in 1892, with William still working in the practice by now taken over by his son Herbert as Wardell and Denning. If we admire the fine proportions and spatial composition of St Carthage's and wonder



Laying of the Foundation Stone of St Carthage's Cathedral, 4th October, 1892. Bishop Jeremiah Doyle stands to the left. On the right the three prelates are Bishop James Corbett of Sale, Cardinal Patrick Moran, Sydney, and Archbishop Thomas Carr, Melbourne. Wardell's framed perspective view rests on the stone.

On The Centenary of St Carthage's Cathedral



at its beautiful detail, it is because it stands in the most pure tradition of Gothic Revival architecture going back directly to Pugin and is of a piece with the splendid form of the three earlier Australian capital city cathedrals.

The Cathedral is Built

Although in October, 1892 Cardinal Moran had laid the foundation stone, the hopes of both bishop and architect were thwarted by the onset of the financial crisis of the 1890's. It was not until the early years of the new century that work actually began. From 1904 the walls rose on the foundations and by mid-1907 the sanctuary, transepts and nave were ready for use. With some anticipation Bishop Doyle celebrated the first Mass on 24th June in space cleared by the workmen and two months later the great day came when Cardinal Moran returned for the Solemn Blessing. The huge excitement and enormous crowds are well described in the contemporary newspaper accounts.

Bishop Doyle was to celebrate only one Christmas in his new Cathedral. Early in 1908 he sailed for the United States, Ireland and Rome. In Dublin he ordered a full peal of twelve bells from the O'Byrne Foundry and in Rome, where he spent a cold December, he was received four times during his ad Limina visit by Pope St Pius X. The Lent of 1909 had already begun when the Bishop finally arrived back in Lismore. With careful preparation he celebrated what was also to be his only Holy Week and Easter in the Cathedral; from then until beyond Pentecost the Bishop was on long journeys by coach and horse confirming hundreds of candidates. Back in Lismore he did not appear one morning for the early Mass. It was found that he had died the evening before, 4th June, 1909, just as he was going to bed. He was 59 years of age. Accompanied by the stunned grief of his priests and people he was buried in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral.

The Mayor of Lismore presided over a memorial appeal for two thousand pounds to pay for the bells from Dublin, subscribed to by people of all denominations. The peal was at length installed in the new tower in June, 1911, with the spire only remaining to complete the original plan. The large pipe organ was blessed in June, 1912. Finally, all debts dissolved, in 1919 St Carthage's Cathedral received its Solemn Dedication by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo. This Feast of Dedication of the mother-church is celebrated every year throughout the Diocese on 16th August.

The House of God and Gate of Heaven

From the time of the early civilisations of the ancient world, the erection of great temples had been a characteristic expression of religion. It still is today. It is the drive of man's spiritual nature that produces great architecture for sacred places. Of all the human and artistic strivings of Christians from the earliest times, one of the most typical has been the construction of the noblest building for divine worship that the community can achieve from its material resources. From the time when the Church emerged from persecution in the early fourth century, a surge of church building began which in a great variety of forms and styles, has continued to the present: basilicas, cathedrals, churches for towns and villages and shrines for places of pilgrimage.

But the antecedents of our church building were established long before. Early in the Judaeo-Christian revelation, Jacob anointed a stone as an altar, exclaiming "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:16-19). The experience of the divine presence in sacred things, persons and places developed eventually into the establishment of the successive temples upon Mount Zion, renowned and loved by the Jews for their beauty and worship and their evocation of the heavenly Jerusalem.

It was the Son of God, however, who would astonish his devout hearers, when he told them that all this was to fall into ruin, only to be built up again into "the temple of his body" (St John 2:19-22).

Like Living Stones

Across the centuries the Church, following the teaching of the apostles, has consequently had a nuanced understanding of the meaning and symbolism to be attached to her places of worship. Making use of an analogy with the fine pagan temples of Ephesus, St Paul could tell the Ephesian Christians how they were to see themselves in that city not as aliens, but as "members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:19-21). Likewise, St Peter could see the Christian people likened to living stones built into a spiritual house, "to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God." (1 Peter 2:5). St John the Apostle's vision (Rev. ch 21) of the New Jerusalem and its worship, coming down from heaven to dwell among men, has also shaped our symbolic understanding of the church building. The tradition finds a beautiful expression in the hymns of the seventh century still used in the Liturgy of the Hours in the Office for the Dedication of a Church (known in English translation as "Blessed City, heavenly Salem," and "Christ is made the sure foundation." – CWB 640).

Unique among the churches

Amongst all the places of worship in a diocese, the Cathedral always stands out because of a unique feature. It is not just the size or beauty of the building, nor even its location. It is because within it is placed a particular symbol which in fact gives this church its name – the cathedra, or Chair, of the Bishop. The origins of the Bishop's chair may be found in the chair from which in former times the master teacher, in religious or secular subjects, addressed

his hearers and in the chair of the civil ruler or judge. But the difference in a cathedral is that the Bishop's Chair does not belong to him, but to Christ! The Chair is the sign in each diocese of the office and presence of the one who is authoritatively sent, as the Lord sent His apostles, to teach and uphold that faith 'once delivered to the saints' by the Son of God. The expression 'ex cathedra' is used today only in reference to the most solemn teachings of the Successor of Peter, but it is 'from the Chair' throughout his diocese that each bishop expounds and confirms the ordinary teaching that comes to us from the apostles and is the common faith of the Catholic Church. It is in this common faith of the universal Church that we stand united as one, into which we baptize new members and in which the Lord strengthens us so that we can spread His gospel as good news in our words and deeds.



Bishop Jeremiah Doyle

Like cathedral, like parish church

While cathedrals tend to be outstanding buildings because of what they symbolically represent, much the same applies to our parish churches. By the religious distinctiveness of their architecture, the beauty of their appointments and the attention and care given to the liturgical worship for which they exist, they too are signs to the human community of town and suburb. The diocese of Lismore is graced with many fine churches, witnessing to the same faith and sacrifice which built the mother-church. Some, indeed, are almost as splendid! The question is posed nowadays whether we could or should still build such heart-lifting buildings

of clear Christian

statement in a secularized world in which standards and perceptions have changed so much and in which the pizza parlour, the sports centre and the shopping mall could be seen as more appropriate exemplars of style for places of worship.

How we believe is how we worship

The answer of course depends on how Christian worship is understood. For Catholics our understanding is formed by what faith open our minds and hearts to see. That vision immediately leads us to the Liturgy. How we believe is how we worship. How we worship is how we believe. How we believe and worship is how we live.

We could not imagine what it would be like to enter a Catholic church and find no altar anywhere to be seen, no baptismal font, no tabernacle, no place for the Sacred Scriptures. These visible things are needed to make a church. They are what the flame is to the lamp, without which the lamp is but another object without a purpose.

The Christian altar, in particular, is like the flame. The church is the building which encloses it and to its light the assembly of believers is drawn to worship. Using the biblical image, the altar is the first and primary symbol of Christ, the Cornerstone. Around and upon Him, like living stones, we all are built, becoming spiritual altars ourselves.

That also is our image of the church building and the reason why we build it so distinctively and beautifully. That sacred building enclosing the altar of the Lord's sacrifice proclaims the mystery of ourselves.

A true house of God, spiritually attractive

Our churches are such a familiar part of our towns and cities that it can be easy to take them for granted and even to lose sight of what they actually represent. We should love them for what they really are and strive to make them places that



Wardell's original perspective view of the completed cathedral

are spiritually attractive, wherein we might catch a little glimpse of heaven on earth. Anyone who enters them should be able sense God's presence straight away and find themselves drawn to prayer. "This is the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Our Cathedral: an opportunity of awareness

Unlike the cathedral of a metropolitan diocese, where people from the suburban parishes come and go to the city and there is a constant familiarity with the great church and easy opportunity to visit it, our Cathedral in Lismore, hundreds of kilometres from many of our parishes, tends to be much less known.

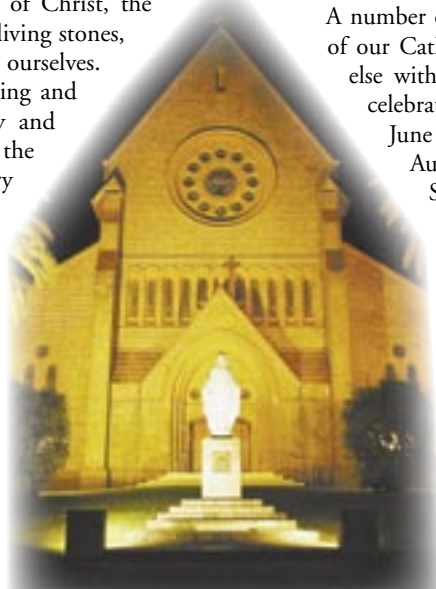
The Cathedral Centenary Year is a good opportunity to become more aware of our mother-church, to learn more of its history and significance and to make a visit (especially a first one) by way of a pilgrimage. There is a teaching opportunity particularly for the children in our parish schools. The publication for children and adults of commemorative material with the illustrated story of our Cathedral and opportunities to make group pilgrimages will be promoted during the Centenary Year. Cathedral pilgrimages are customary in many dioceses. Parish Pilgrimages to St Carthage's and Masses and devotions for groups will receive a special welcome during the Centenary Year.

The Centenary Programme

A number of events and works are planned to mark the century of our Cathedral. Firstly, as the Church is concerned before all else with attracting people to Christ, the centrepiece of our celebrations is the **Centenary Mission** at the Cathedral, 23rd June to Sunday, 1st July, 2007. Bishop Julian Porteous, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney and Rector of Good Shepherd Seminary will lead a large team of seminarians and young people from NET Ministries. The Mission is for the whole Church in Lismore and district, not just the Cathedral parish, with a welcome to all.

The **Centenary Mass** will be celebrated in thanksgiving on the actual date of 1907, Saturday, 18th August.

The Diocese will be honoured to welcome as the principal celebrant His Excellency the Most Reverend Ambrose De Paoli, Apostolic Nuncio in Australia. The Mass will be followed by a weekend of celebrations.



On The Centenary of St Carthage's Cathedral



Secondly, a series of **cultural and musical events** at the Cathedral will soon be announced, including visiting performers and notable works.

Thirdly, a comprehensive programme of **upgrading and refurbishing of the Cathedral's amenities and liturgical arrangements** has been drawn up by our architects, the first items of which we expect will be undertaken during the year. These will include the restoration of the sanctuary, retrieving some original items and installing a fixed and permanent table-altar matching the old and the completing of the marble and mosaic paving. The result will be a beautiful and completed setting for the modern liturgy, in continuity with the heritage of the past.

Much improvement will be made to the lighting, electrical and fire safety systems and providing for the ease and safety of future interior and exterior maintenance.

Bringing it all to Completion

In the overall brief, the architects were asked to consider, as a final goal for the Centenary, possible ways of completing the tower. The lofty Wardell spire of solid masonry as originally conceived would be an impossible project to consider today, but modern engineering, materials and construction techniques might propose a worthy option at manageable cost. This now appears to be a possibility. If the Catholic people wish it to be, it is they who will ensure that it comes about with a similar feat of generosity with which their forbears gave Bishop Doyle the first forty thousand pounds enabling him to achieve his and their, great objective. A hundred years on, we can prove ourselves as the generation that has kept faith with Bishop Doyle's vision, by finally bringing to completion the great work of the Cathedral which he began. It is a goal we can set ourselves by, if not before, the centenary of his death – 4th June, 2009.

The Witness to Faith, the Works of Charity

Entering its second century, St Carthage's Cathedral stands as a witness in high architecture and art to the faith of a people. Its walls have witnessed their worship in tens of thousands of Masses and reflected heavenward their prayers and praises. Its font has given new birth in Christ to generations of children, its long centre aisle witnessed the joys of countless weddings and the sorrows of so many earthly

partings. The succession of bishops who have occupied its Chair have been laid nearby to their rest. New vocations to the priesthood have stirred on its altar steps and young men on the day of their ordination have lain in consecration on its sanctuary pavement. The merciful Lord in the secrets of its confessionals has lifted the burden of sin from thousands of souls. The Word proclaimed here has warmed the hearts and hands of an army of men and women to the works of Christian charity and service for the poor and needy. The Cathedral looks out over the continuing works of education which long ago grew in its shadow, across to St Vincent's Hospital, founded in a similar act of faith and hope as its own and to more recent facilities of care for the aged.

A Powerful Symbol for the Future

Still today you can see the eyes of curious children wonderingly explore the details of the Cathedral's gables, roof and tower and inside delighting in its ornaments and windows of painted glass. This building to the glory of God continues to create in both young and old impressions of the faith that words can but faintly describe. In the noisy world of fleeting time, where money reigns as the measure of all things and material possessions seem more important than eternal ones, the Cathedral maintains in dignity and grace its silent witness.

It is a powerful symbol of the unseen world standing at the top of our earthly city and in the heart of our Diocese: "Here God lives among men. He will make his home with them; they shall be his people and he will be their God; his name is God-with-them." (Rev. 21:3)

I commend to your participation and prayers all the celebrations and projects of the Cathedral Centenary Year and confide its success to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and to our heavenly patron, St Carthage of Lismore.

With the assurances of my constant prayer and heartfelt blessing,

✠ Geoffrey Jarrett

From St Carthage's Cathedral, on 22nd February, 2007, the Feast of the Chair of St Peter and the sixth anniversary of my Episcopal Ordination.

