



Bishop John Steven Satterthwaite

1928-2016

*Fourth Bishop of Lismore. Coadjutor bishop
(1969-1970) Bishop of Lismore (1971-2001)*

May he rest in peace.

Bishop Satterthwaite died on Saturday, 23 April 2016, just one week short of the 47th anniversary of his ordination to the episcopate by Cardinal Gilroy.

His provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the contribution of this unassuming man to the life of the Catholic community on the North Coast of New South Wales.

Ordained originally for the Diocese of Armidale, Bishop Satterthwaite was what has been termed “a late vocation”. Prior to ordination he had studied engineering at Sydney University and theology at the Lateran University in Rome. Ordination to the priesthood brought with it service in Glen Innes as assistant priest and Armidale as Chancellor and Bishop’s Secretary. At the time of his appointment to Lismore he was Administrator of the Cathedral.

In 1969, at the relatively young age of forty he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop to the then Bishop, Patrick Farrelly, himself first appointed as Coadjutor to Bishop John Carroll in 1931.

Bishop Satterthwaite spent the first years in the Diocese in Casino and Grafton before becoming Bishop of Lismore in 1971, on the retirement of Bishop Farrelly.

Like his predecessor Bishop Satterthwaite sought and received a Coadjutor Bishop, Geoffrey Jarrett, appointed in December 2000. Having given his

successor time to settle in he submitted his retirement to the Holy See. This was accepted. So, some thirty years after his appointment as Bishop of Lismore and thirty two years after his ordination as a Bishop, he laid aside his pastoral staff as Bishop of the Diocese of Lismore.

He has been Bishop of the Diocese for some thirty years. During that time he has devoted himself tirelessly to this area of the world. It was a time of great change, both in the Church and in the community. It was left to Bishop Satterthwaite, in cooperation with priests, religious and laity, to implement the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. This required, above all, kindness and firmness.

Though eminently capable he chose not to go on committees that would take him away from his Diocese, choosing rather to fulfil the role of a “country bishop”. In the main this consisted of a weekly round of visiting parishes from Tweed in the north to Camden Haven in the south. In addition to administering the sacrament of Confirmation, went to the school, he assisted with confessions, and visited the sick. He made sure that he visited the parents of priests and religious living in the parish.

Always available he would accept invitations to any part of the Diocese. This often meant travelling to Port Macquarie on one day, returning to



Lismore to travel to Tweed Heads the next day. He loved celebrating Mass in the small churches surrounding Lismore. The people at Dunoon and Goolmangar, Larnook and Nimbin remember him with great affection. At Christmas and Easter, having celebrated the evening before in the Cathedral he would often travel to Mallanganee, beyond Casino, to say Mass for the people there.

When in Lismore, he took his turn in parish duties. Every week, when in town, he would walk to St Vincent's Hospital and visit all the patients. In the Chancery he often walked down to the Post Office to collect the mail. Having completed his administrative duties he would often visit the sick or the families of those who had died in Lismore.

Of course, in his younger days, there was always time for a game of squash where he would race some hapless opponent around the court, often one of the Marist Brothers or the assistant priest.

He had a great affection for the Italian families in Lismore and district and was always available to say Mass in Italian for them at the Italo club during November and at New Italy after Easter. He loved nothing more than a plate of pasta and a glass of red wine, usually homemade!

While he presided over many great initiatives in the Diocese: education, health and aged care to name the more important things, he took no credit for them. They are the result, he says, of generosity and hard work of priests and people at the local level. However, without his encouragement they would not have happened. He was loath to take any credit, remarking, in his rather dry manner, that "when I am lying in a coffin someone else will be lying in the pulpit".

Bishop Satterthwaite is above all a man who has tried to treat everyone equally. One person said to me, "in meeting the Bishop you never feel nervous

or frightened." He has often told me that in dealing with people one should never put them in a corner. It may not be generally known that the Bishop was a member of the Ozanam Villa Conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society. He rarely missed the Tuesday night meeting.

One person affectionately called him "our no frills Bishop". His homilies were always concise, his public statements given in language all could understand. He saw his most important role not as an administrator but as a teacher. He taught not so much by what he said as by what he did. Few except those who have lived with him would know that if you wanted to find him at 5.30 a.m. he would be found at prayer in the Cathedral.

In retirement he chose to return to parish duties, first in Bellingen before settling in Port Macquarie as chaplain to its aged care. He continued to do what he had always done: hospital and home visitation. When he left his home in Lismore for the last time he did so in the same way he had come to it some thirty years before – with nothing more than a small suitcase!

Bishop Satterthwaite's mortal remains were received into St Carthage's Cathedral on the evening of the 1st May, 47 years to the day after his ordination to the episcopate by Cardinal Gilroy in 1969.

Source : ACBC

Bishop Satterthwaite ordained 45 priests,

All together he gave the Catholic church close to 60 years of official service, working diligently to build the Lismore congregation through difficult times.

He helped build a new generation for the church.

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