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BISHOP FRANCIS AUGUSTIN HENSCHKE

(1892 - 1968)

by Bishop F. P. Carroll

A paper read to the Society on 17 March 1969.

Francis Augustin Henschke was Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga for a little over twenty-eight years. During that time he identified himself with many aspects of the life of Wagga Wagga and district and so it is fitting that his life be recalled and appreciated in the historical annals of this region. This paper will present his life and recount his achievements principally as a Churchman. This warrants no apology, I feel, for it will simply and truly reflect the reality of his life which was centred in the Church and its mission, and his wider activities and significance always derived from his understanding of his calling in the Christian Church.

The late Bishop came to the Diocese of Wagga Wagga from South Australia, and it is in that State that the Henschke name is best known and appreciated, for this family of Polish-German stock has made a notable contribution to South Australian history. The Henschke line began in Australia in the middle of the last century when George Henschke migrated from Posen in Poland with his Polish wife and a daughter who later became Sister M. Annette, one of the original members of the Sisters of St Joseph, the first Religious Order founded in Australia. These Sisters sought to provide for a peculiarly Australian problem—the education of the poor children in the outback areas. George Henschke settled at Eden Valley, and later at Mintaro and Hookina; at this latter place August Henschke, father of the Bishop, was born.

The Bishop's maternal grandfather, John Michael, came from Bavaria in 1848 with Franz Weikert who founded the Sevenhill settlement. His maternal grandmother was also a Bavarian who came to Australia in 1854.



Bishop F. A. Henschke

August Henschke and his wife Annie Michael had eleven children. All of the seven sons were over six feet tall; Francis Augustin's impressive 6'4" did not rank him as the tallest of the family. A family photograph taken on the day of his consecration as Bishop shows the seven sons and two daughters with their parents. Empty chairs indicate the early death of two other girls. Eventually six members of the family devoted



Bishop Henschke among his family at his consecration in 1940.

their lives to God in the Religious or priestly life—two became Religious Sisters, three (including the Bishop) became Priests and one a Religious Brother. The other three sons married and have raised families of their own.

The late Bishop was born at Hookina, in what can only be described as the outback of South Australia, on 2 January 1892. He and the rest of the family were brought up on the land and he retained a love of the soil and the countryside for the rest of his life.

His early education was in the hands of his parents and a small local school. Later on he was enrolled as a pupil at Sacred Heart College, Glenelg, South Australia, where he completed his secondary studies. For a short time he took up teaching in the Department of Education, Adelaide, but soon offered himself to the Most Reverend John H. Norton, the then Bishop of Port Augusta, as a candidate for the priesthood.

He was sent to Ireland where he made his studies in Philosophy at the famous monastic College of Mt Melleray conducted by the Cistercian monks in County Waterford. He then went to Propaganda College in Rome for his theological studies. Prior to commencing the study of theology he was granted a Doctorate in Philosophy—a degree that was seldom mentioned in his later life. At the end of his four years

theology he was ordained a Priest in St John Lateran's Basilica on 2 June 1917 by Cardinal Pompili.

The First World War was still in progress and caused the journey home some delays and a few dangers. Upon his return he was given his first appointment as an assistant Priest at Hawker, South Australia, where he stayed for a little over a year. He was then transferred to Jamestown where he remained for the next nineteen years. During the first ten years there he was Curate and then became Parish Priest. While there he was also appointed Chancellor of the Diocese in 1924, a Diocesan Consultor in 1929 and Vicar-General in 1935. He was holding all of these posts when he was chosen to be a Bishop.

Bishop Joseph Wilfred Dwyer of Wagga Wagga had asked Pope Pius XI to grant him the aid of an Auxiliary Bishop. On 20 May 1937 Francis Augustin Henschke was appointed Titular Bishop of Praenetus and Auxiliary to Bishop Dwyer. His Consecration took place in St Anacletus' Cathedral, Peterborough, on Sunday, 15 August 1937. The chief consecrating Prelate was the Most Rev. Dr Killian, Archbishop of Adelaide and he was assisted by Most Rev. N. T. Gilroy who had been his Bishop in his old diocese and had recently been appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Sydney, and by the Bishop of Wilcannia-Forbes, the Most Rev. Dr Fox who had been a companion of Bishop Henschke at school and in the seminary.

Three priests from the Wagga Wagga Diocese made the trip to participate in the function and, no doubt, to observe what was coming to them. The three were the late Dean Hartigan of Narrandera (John O'Brien of poetic fame); Dr Harper, now associated with the Catholic National Radio and T.V. Centre in Sydney; and Fr L. Hatswell, now Parish Priest of Lockhart.

On his arrival in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga Bishop Henschke was installed as Parish Priest of Junee and appointed Vicar-General of the Diocese. Due to the ill-health of the old Bishop, his Auxiliary had occasion to travel extensively around the Diocese, but he was very much the Parish Priest in Junee, getting to know his people and serving them in every way. Already many characteristics that were to mark his life and work as Bishop of the Diocese showed themselves. His gift of simplicity in speaking and instructing, that always struck a cord in his listeners, his constant devotion to the Confessional and counselling, his manly straight-forwardness and sympathetic understanding of human nature.

On the death of Bishop Dwyer on 11 October 1939 Bishop Henschke did not automatically succeed as Bishop of the

Diocese, the right of succession being the chief difference between a Coadjutor and an Auxiliary. As a matter of fact, when he was eventually appointed by Pope Pius XII it was rather a unique happening, for it was the first time in the history of the Catholic Church in Australia that a Bishop had been appointed to succeed the man to whom he had been appointed Auxiliary.

On the death of the Bishop the Diocesan Consultors elected Bishop Henschke as Vicar Capitular to care for the vacant diocese until such time as a new Pastor should be appointed. Eventually Bishop Henschke was appointed as the second Bishop of Wagga Wagga on 16 November 1939.

His official enthronement took place in St Michael's Cathedral on Sunday, 31 March 1940, and was conducted by the Apostolic Delegate, the most Reverend J. Panico, in the presence of eight Bishops, numerous Priests and Religious and an overflow crowd of people; hundreds could not gain entrance and listened to the proceedings by means of a wireless set installed in St Joseph's schoolroom.

At a garden party held at Mt Erin on the same afternoon, Bishop Henschke responded to the Address of Welcome of the people of the diocese. During the course of his remarks he said: 'I have been appointed by God through the Holy Father to look after you and be your Father in Christ. It is formidable, but I take consolation that the people are behind me, that what has been said is sincere, and that anything I ask you will be done. My endeavour will be to advance your spiritual good. I may make mistakes, but I will always have the interests of advancing your spiritual good. That is my one purpose in life.'

On the following day he was tendered a civic reception by the Mayor of Wagga Wagga, Alderman H. E. Gissing; his words of welcome were seconded by the Deputy Mayor, Alderman J. V. Doyle, and supported by the Hon. J. F. O'Regan, M.L.C., Mr R. Johnston, Mr Tom Collins, M.H.R., and Mr F. Forde, M.H.R. In his reply Bishop Henschke addressed those present as 'Fellow citizens of Wagga Wagga'; this was indicative of the way he was to identify himself with his adopted city during the rest of his life. The citizens of Wagga Wagga in their turn recognised him as one of themselves to such an extent that in 1967, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood, he was awarded the rare distinction of the Freedom of the City. This was an honour that he greatly appreciated.

The diocese to which Bishop Henschke succeeded had not had a very long history—it had been formally constituted by Papal Brief in 1917 (the year of its second Bishop's priestly

Ordination). The new diocese was cut off from Goulburn and at the time was regarded as scarcely viable by some of the critics. The region marked out for the Murrumbidgee Irrigation scheme was 'thrown in' to make up the acreage—its subsequent growth, because of the success of irrigation, added a whole new and vital area to the diocese.

When the first Bishop, Joseph Wilfred Dwyer, was consecrated in 1918 there were sixteen parishes in the area of 24,000 square miles; he had few priests and had to borrow them when and where possible. When the second Bishop came to carry on the work of his predecessor there were twenty-one parishes staffed by thirty-six priests, while the Catholic population was put at 25,000.

During the Bishop's more than twenty-eight years in office the diocese saw spectacular progress in terms of population, personnel and material buildings. Much of this growth simply reflected the development of the Riverina area generally, but it owed much to the vision and leadership of Bishop Henschke. The Catholic population grew to almost 45,000, the number of parishes to thirty, and at the time of the Bishop's death sixty priests were numbered in the ranks of the diocesan clergy. In the city of Wagga Wagga itself, the original Cathedral Parish was progressively divided into four, and now there are St Michael's, South Wagga Wagga (1955), Koorinal (1965) and West Wagga Wagga (1966).

Several new Religious Orders came to the diocese at the invitation of the Bishop. Priests of the Divine Word Fathers and of the Capuchin Franciscans came to assist the local clergy; both groups arrived in 1956, the Divine Word Fathers to set up their minor Seminary, and the Capuchins to take charge of the predominantly Italian parish embracing Yenda, Yoogali and Hanwood in the irrigation area. The Marist Brothers were welcomed to Griffith in 1950 and Leeton a few years later; in the latter centre they conduct the only Catholic boarding school for boys in the diocese. Further variety was added to the ranks of the Religious Sisters of the area with the coming of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion, the Daughters of Charity and the Carmelite Sisters. The Home of Compassion was established in Wagga Wagga in 1952, the Daughters of Charity set up their home for the aged in Leeton while the Carmelite Sisters realised a long-standing dream of the Bishop when they came to Wagga Wagga in 1966 to provide a monastery of contemplative prayer within the diocese.

Many and notable buildings, used to further the manifold work of the Church, were erected during those years. The late Bishop usually shrugged off his part in these, saying that all he did was to give permission for others to do the work, and

the priests, religious and the generous Catholic people built and financed them. But in point of fact he was a driving force in all projects of this kind. Many of these buildings were schools to accommodate a school population that almost doubled during his years as Bishop—from just over 4,000 children in Catholic schools in 1939 to almost 8,000 in 1968. Other aspects of the Church's charitable and social work were not neglected. The Albury Mercy Hospital, the Wagga Wagga Home of Compassion, the Leeton Assumption Villa for the aged and the new maternity block at Calvary Hospital provided for those needing medical treatment and care. Several shelters for the destitute were founded in Albury and Wagga Wagga by the St Vincent de Paul Society and the same Society established four stores to help support its works of charity. Convents, presbyteries and churches were built in considerable numbers; the churches ranged from those in new areas such as Khancoban with its link with the Snowy Mountains scheme, to the provision of new buildings to replace the old in more established areas, such as the largest church in the Diocese at Leeton.

Building programmes are inevitably dependent on matters of finance. Bishop Henschke enjoyed great acumen and judgement in this field. The outstanding achievement in this regard must be the Diocesan Provident Fund. In 1962 the Secretary of the Fund described its foundation in these words:

During the year 1960, the building programme of the Diocese came almost to a halt. Due to the credit restrictions then in force, there was no money available for long-term borrowing such as the Church required. However, as there still existed a great need for new buildings—churches, schools and convents—in different parts of the Diocese, the Bishop decided to turn to his people to obtain the necessary money.

After careful study of similar schemes operating in the Archdioceses of Melbourne and Hobart, and after much preliminary planning, His Lordship the Bishop established, in April 1961, what has become known as the Wagga Wagga Diocesan Provident Fund. In essence, this Diocesan Provident Fund is a bank, which is owned by the people of the Diocese. They invest in the Fund, which, in turn, lends to the parishes.

On 21 April 1961, the first deposit (of £100) was received by the Fund, but by the end of the first twelve months, more than £200,000 was loaned to the Fund by the people of the Diocese—striking evidence of their confidence in their Bishop, and in themselves.

With the money received to date, it has been possible to

resume a full-scale building programme throughout the Diocese; many buildings have been completed and the most recent appeal of the Bishop for investment in the Diocesan Provident Fund will, without a doubt, enable other planned buildings to be undertaken.

Since that time the Fund has continued to grow and today the parishes of the diocese have loans of well over a million dollars, making possible practically every building project of the past seven years.

In the field of education the Bishop had strong views, not only on specifically Catholic schooling. He often spoke, and wrote several articles advocating an education suited to the living circumstances of the children. He felt that country schools should be geared to a greater degree to the needs of country conditions and living. He had a great interest in the provision of tertiary facilities in country areas for he deplored the constant drain of the young (and consequently their families in many instances) from the country to the cities. Thus he supported such projects as the Riverine University, the establishment of Colleges of Advanced Education and the like.

He campaigned and spoke often and eloquently for the granting of Government financial support of independent schools, although he kept repeating that the parents and people themselves were the ones who had the first responsibility and the power to put the case most effectively. In the administrative section of Catholic education his enlightened leadership and his confidence in his people resulted in Wagga Wagga having perhaps the most efficient diocesan system in New South Wales. In 1962 he set up a Diocesan Council for Education consisting of laity, religious and clergy; his acceptance of their very representative advice and recommendations and a readiness to experiment brought many happy results even in a period of critical difficulties for education generally. Outside the Catholic schools, he encouraged the use of Religious teachers in the instruction of Catholic children attending State schools and authorised the work of the 'Motor Mission Sisters' in Corowa and Wagga Wagga.

The Bishop's personal love of rural life and his concern for the welfare of Australia as a Christian country led him to see decentralisation as a vital issue. In 1939 the National Catholic Rural Movement was formed—its motto could have been the Bishop's own, 'To restore Christ to the countryside and the countryside to Christ'. For over twenty-five years he was the Episcopal Chairman of the Rural Movement and has been justly regarded as its Father. His sound common sense often reduced utopian idealism to practical action, but his

approach in this field as in every other was always one of constructive, never destructive, criticism.

The San Isidore settlement just outside Wagga Wagga was established by the Bishop as an experiment in Christian Rural Community living. To the end he manifested a constant interest in the settlement and its people and one of his last administrative acts was to authorise the building of the new Church. Through the Rural Movement, especially in the earlier days, Bishop Henschke was a close associate of Mr B. A. Santamaria. This association grew into a close friendship and mutual regard. The Bishop's subsequent support of Mr Santamaria and his policies even in the wider social, industrial and political areas was constant and publicly known. Mr Santamaria in his turn was unbounded in his appreciation of the Bishop; he concluded a tribute to Bishop Henschke on the occasion of his twenty-five years as Bishop with these words:

He sticks to his principles and to his friends—even when it might be more comfortable to keep that little distance which is the margin between safety and trouble. A son is indeed bereft if, when he is in trouble, he is abandoned by his father. But, if I am sure of anything, it is that no one who looked to Bishop Henschke for help in affliction could ever say, 'He let me down'.

On the same occasion of the Bishop's Silver Jubilee the National Director of the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, Monsignor G. M. Crennan, himself a Priest of the Wagga Wagga Diocese released for work in the immigration field, wrote this tribute:

In the days of post-war large scale immigration, when unusual decisions had to be made and plans formulated for the right ordering of the rapid expansions occurring in the Catholic life in Australia, His Lordship, Bishop Henschke, was prodigal of time and prolific of practical proposals.

In three of the busiest years of the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, His Lordship, as a member, travelled regularly and frequently to Sydney for the lengthy meetings that were needed then for an adequate care of a host of affairs of great moment to the life and growth of the Catholic Church in this country.

Within the Diocese of Wagga Wagga the Bishop was one of the first to avail of the services of 'foreign chaplains' for the spiritual care of immigrants.

His Lordship also gave a lead—and maintains it—in promoting the resettlement of migrant families by the offer of accommodation and employment and in the provision of practical aid for many who are of the category of 'difficult to resettle'.

In the 1956 Hungarian emergency, the Bishop's parochial committee was at hand at Wagga Wagga airport to welcome the refugees arriving from overseas, by chartered planes, for Bonegilla.

Later, in the appeals of World Refugee Year, His Lordship ensured that Wagga Wagga Diocese appeared promptly and notably in the subscription list; also, as Episcopal Chairman of the N.C.R.M. the Bishop warmly encouraged members with their project of the erection of numbers of small homes for Chinese refugees at Macau—a settlement known as 'N.S.R.M.—Australia'.

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation area especially in the Griffith region is held up as one of the most successful exercises in the assimilation of migrants into the community life. A considerable amount of this success could be rightly attributed to the spiritual and material help provided by the Church under the direction of Bishop Henschke.

Although Bishop Henschke was an active and valued member of the State and National Conference of Bishops and played a part in many activities and movements of a wider-than-diocesan extent, he was happiest when occupied with pastoral work within the diocese. Until ill-health limited his activity in his last year, he was always ready to travel to any part of the diocese—usually at a very rapid rate—to attend functions of a spiritual, civic or even social nature. In the city of Wagga Wagga itself, he spent as much time as was possible in the ordinary pastoral matters and regarded himself as a Parish Priest rather than a Bishop. In the early 1960s, however, he, together with the rest of the Catholic Bishops through the world, were reminded dramatically of their responsibility to the Church and indeed the world at large.

On 25 December 1961, Pope John XXIII officially convoked the Second Vatican Council to begin sometime in 1962. On 11 October 1962 he solemnly opened the first session of the Ecumenical Council, which he saw as the effort of the Church to put forward the eternal truths of Christianity in forms and language suited to the changed world of the modern era. Already three years of intensive study and work had gone into the preparation of the Council; the following four years were to see the Bishops of the world addressing themselves to the massive task of 'aggiornamento'.

For the Australian Bishops, including Bishop Henschke, the Council meant four trips to Rome and back. Each session meant a two to three months' absence from their dioceses. For a man in his seventies whose health had begun to deteriorate somewhat the Council imposed a severe strain, and

this was rather obvious in its effect on Bishop Henschke. Nevertheless, he was assiduous in his attendance at the daily Council sessions. He did not speak at any stage of the Council, but did contribute with some written submissions and by his part in the discussions of the Australian Bishops which were held regularly during the course of the Council. Although he certainly realised the fundamental importance and epoch-making nature of the Council, he often felt he could be doing more good back in Wagga Wagga, and it was always a great happiness for him to return to Australia either on the first available plane or even the one before.

When the Vatican Council closed in December 1965, Bishop Henschke was still active in his pastoral work, but age and health were already beginning to take effect. He still retained, however, his ability to 'keep up with the times' and even show the way. He was quick to implement many of the changes stemming from the Council in the liturgical, ecumenical and apostolate fields. An example of his readiness to allow experimentation was his invitation to the Redemptorist Fathers to conduct the six-months-long Regional Mission for the four parishes of Wagga Wagga. This featured such things as the successful religious census conducted as an ecumenical project, home gatherings and the close involvement of lay people in the mission work. Both in Australia and elsewhere, e.g. in Manila (Phillipines), the experience of the Wagga Wagga mission has been put to good use.

The Vatican Council had strongly recommended that Bishops would offer their resignation at least at the age of 75 years. Towards the end of 1966 Bishop Henschke wrote to the appropriate Roman Congregation offering his resignation to the Pope; should his offer not be accepted, he requested that he be given the assistance of a Coadjutor Bishop. The latter part of his request was acceded to and on 1 July 1967 one of the priests of the Diocese, Father Francis Patrick Carroll, was appointed as Coadjutor with the right of succession.

Bishop Henschke was a humble man and showed this virtue in the way he welcomed and gave his fullest co-operation to the younger man who was to succeed him. It was Bishop Henschke himself who was the principal Consecrator of the new Bishop on 5 September 1967; no-one of the twenty-three Bishops, 250 priests, 200 sisters and 1,500 people present in the Plaza cinema could help but be impressed by the simple dignity and sincerity of the now venerable Prelate in his conducting of the ceremony.

He was to live only another five months—during that time he was able to combine a continued active interest in the

diocese together with a facility of giving his Coadjutor a fully responsible part in the affairs of the diocese.

The cancerous condition of the lymphatic system began to deteriorate and he went to hospital in Wagga Wagga and later to Lewisham Hospital in Sydney for treatment. A Diocesan rally was to be held in Albury in October to mark the golden jubilee of the diocese, of the apparitions at Fatima and of the Bishop's own priestly ordination. He badgered the doctors and sisters until they agreed to his coming back from Sydney for the rally, which he attended together with the Apostolic Delegate. There is little doubt that he realised it would be the last diocesan occasion that he would share with his people and he was greatly heartened by the expressions of faith and loyalty given by many thousands on that day. He returned almost immediately to hospital, and although he returned to the Bishop's House for a time and even celebrated the Christmas Midnight Mass, the next few months found him very ill. He returned from Lewisham to his well-loved Calvary Hospital in February and died there on 24 February 1968.

Expressions of sympathy from all quarters of the community and the marks of respect shown by all on the day of his funeral indicated the standing he enjoyed not only with his Catholic people but with all. A vast crowd of people joined with the many Bishops and civic dignitaries in the final Requiem Mass. Cardinal Gilroy was the chief Celebrant, while the new Bishop of Wagga Wagga preached the panegyric. During the funeral procession that proceeded from the Cathedral down Johnston Street and around the Civic Centre corner back to the Cathedral, the city of Wagga Wagga paused to pay its mead of respect to the man who had been granted the Freedom of the City in recognition of his contribution to the welfare of the community. He was buried in his Cathedral on 29 February 1968.

I am conscious that much more should be said of the late Bishop; little has been related of his virtues; his day-to-day fidelity; no anecdotes that capture his character and warmth of personality have been recounted—perhaps one day a book will be written.

I conclude with a few extracts from the panegyric preached on the day of his burial.

'Behold a great High Priest who in
his day pleased God'

It is far from easy to speak about such a man as Bishop Francis Augustin Henschke whom we are remembering and honouring today. The difficulty arises not from lack of something to say but from a superabundance of things that could

and should be said. A biographical outline would be long for he lived long—a little over seventy-six years; a description of his works and achievements would fill many a volume for he was ever active—even as he carried out one project he was planning new ventures; any attempt to describe his character and enumerate his virtues poses a formidable task, for his virtues were so many and outstanding that it is almost impossible to sum up the greatness and goodness of our late Bishop.

Pardon me then if the outline of his life is brief and inadequate; if the summary of his works blurs into generalities; if the impressions of his character and moral worth are haphazard and incomplete. For one thing only I make no apologies—that is for the genuine sincerity and feeling with which I speak of one whom I together with the whole of his people in the Wagga Wagga Diocese have regarded above all as a Father.

Francis Augustin Henschke was born at Hookina in the Diocese of Port Augusta (now Port Pirie), South Australia, on 2 January 1892. The Henschke name occupies an honoured and outstanding place in the annals of South Australia and the family has greatly enriched the Church of Australia. In the Bishop's own family six of the eleven children consecrated their lives to the service of God as Priests or Religious. To the members of the Henschke family whether with us today or in distant climes we offer our sympathy on the death of the Bishop and proclaim the immense debt of gratitude that the Church in Australia and particularly the Church in Wagga Wagga owes to their family. A priest once said to the Bishop: 'Your mother must have been a wonderful person'. His reply—typical in its understatement and dry humour was, 'The old man wasn't too bad either!'

After his early education in a small local school, he completed his secondary studies with the Marist Brothers at Sacred Heart College, Glenelg. He taught for a short time with the Department of Education in Adelaide and offered himself to the Bishop of Port Augusta, the Most Reverend John H. Norton, D.D., as a student for the priesthood. He studied first in the monastic college of Mt Melleray in County Waterford in Ireland; his theological studies were carried on at Propaganda College, Rome; and he was ordained a Priest in St John Lateran's Basilica on 2 June 1917.

The late Bishop served as a Curate in Hawker, South Australia, for a short time before being transferred to Jamestown where he worked for the next nineteen years as Curate, Administrator and Parish Priest. At the time of his nomination as Titular Bishop of Praenetus and Auxiliary Bishop to Bishop Dwyer of Wagga Wagga, he was also Chancellor and Vicar-

General of the Port Pirie Diocese. Although he left the Parish of Jamestown and the diocese of his birth over thirty years ago, there are still many who remember him with affection and reverence.

On 15 August 1937 Francis Augustin Henschke was consecrated in St Anacletus' Cathedral, Peterborough. Cardinal Gilroy, whom we welcome today as our principal celebrant, was one of the co-consecrators of the new Bishop. A group of priests from Wagga Wagga made the journey to Peterborough for the occasion. Upon arrival in the Wagga Wagga Diocese he went to Juneee as Parish Priest and Vicar-General of the diocese. After the death of Bishop Dwyer, Bishop Henschke was appointed on 16 November 1939 as the second Bishop of Wagga Wagga. Thence began the life and work as chief pastor of the diocese, which was to continue for over twenty-eight years and was to earn for him the admiration, gratitude and love of innumerable people. In his first address to the people of the diocese after his enthronement he said: 'I have been appointed by God through the Holy Father to look after you and to be your Father in Christ. My endeavour ever will be to advance your spiritual good . . . that is my one purpose in life'. His faithful pursuit of that one ambition and the living out of that role of a Father in Christ was the story of his life unto the very end.

A numerical list of material progress in the diocese during his pontificate would make very impressive hearing. The increase in numbers of priests and religious—the number of buildings—churches, schools, hospitals, homes for the aged and infirmed and unfortunate. Suffice it to say that no facet of the life of the Church or indeed of the community in which he lived was outside the ambit of his active and productive interest. But it was essentially in his dealings with people and his attitude to them that his greatness lies. It is true to say that he is best remembered and revered not so much for what he did, though this was extraordinary in its variety and extent, nor for what he said and preached—effective and appealing as that always was—but for what he was—the man of God who loved his Lord and Master and loved all men as his brothers in Christ.

His fellow Bishops of Australia, so many of whom have come to honour him today, knew the worth of their colleague and brother Bishop. They understood that his contribution to the good of God's Church was not restricted to his own diocese. In their meetings and combined work he was a rock of common-sense with a great grasp of reality. In his own quiet way he contributed much to the Church in Australia. He was active in various national bodies and works such as the Rural Move-

ment, his work for immigration, his lead in such things as Project Compassion. His active interest in the Church extended far beyond the shores of Australia. His willingness to release priests from his small number of clergy for work outside the diocese both overseas and in Australia was indicative of his breadth of vision and his love for the Church of Christ wherever it might be found.

Bishop Henschke was a byword among priests as a truly pastoral man who for many years past was living so many of the ideals of a true Bishop as outlined by the Second Vatican Council. The clergy can be severe critics but they are honest judges of the genuine article—very rarely has a Bishop enjoyed the deep respect, loyalty and love of his priests to the extent that Bishop Henschke has. He in his turn trusted and loved his priests. One of the last things he said to me was, 'You will have a grand body of priests to help you'. The reputation of the Wagga Wagga priests for their spirit of unity, hospitality and genuine Christian charity simply reflects the spirit of him who has led them more by example than precept for so many years.

The religious who have worked in the diocese have always enjoyed the best of relations with the late Bishop. He realised his great dependence on them for so much of the work of the Church and he was always ready to give them every encouragement in their work in the fields of education, care of the sick, the aged, the orphans, and in their life of prayer.

The people of the diocese knew that their pastor was one who understood them, one who took them for what they were and so had sympathy and understanding even when they might fail to live up to what he might have hoped for from them. One would think that his tall and impressive figure would have created awe and perhaps even fear amongst children. On the contrary, the very young sensed a kindred spirit and loved to be with him. He in turn enjoyed their company and always showed his interest in them. Young people were very much in his thoughts and he encouraged his priests in their work for youth. His great delight was to speak to young people approaching marriage and there would be not hundreds but thousands of married people today who look back with gratitude to his words of solid instruction and advice. Perhaps his greatest interest was in the family and family life. In his sermons he often returned to his favourite theme of family prayer. He saw the family as did the Second Vatican Council, as the domestic Church. He saw the future of the Church and of the nation standing or falling on the quality of its family life. The sick were always assured of his sympathy.

His visit to Calvary Hospital was one of the 'musts' of his weekly routine.

With the laity in general he was, in a sense, ahead of his times. Open to suggestion and advice he has earned the trust and co-operation of his people because he was prepared to give them his confidence by informing them, by consulting them, by heeding their advice, by giving them responsibility. He was always prepared to meet the people—his availability has become legendary; woe betide any priest who did not disturb the Bishop if someone wished to speak to him.

Not only the Catholic people of the diocese are mourning the death of the late Bishop; the people of the area generally have always known of his interest in community affairs and in anything that was for the good of this part of the state. He was a man of the soil who never lost his love for the countryside and things rural. The city of Wagga Wagga last year paid recognition to him as a citizen by awarding him the rare distinction of the Freedom of the City. His acceptance of people as people, his open mind and big heart helped to develop the friendly relationship between the various Christian Churches. This friendliness that has deepened so much in recent times is underlined by the presence of so many representatives of other Churches today.

The late Bishop was a man of deep Christian faith, 'He lived by faith'. The day before his death he could say, 'I have always relied on the Holy Ghost and He has never let me down'. He was a man of prayer; the Mass was the centre of his life—he assisted at Mass and received Communion only two hours before his death. His faithfulness to the hearing of Confessions was known far and wide and even if no other priest were available to hear, the Bishop's Confessional was always sure to be occupied. He had a tender devotion to our Blessed Lady. The rosary beads were never far from his hands and his House was a Rosary home.

If time allowed we could speak of his prudence, his courage and determination; of his constancy in support of his friends and of what he believed to be right; and of his gentleness that came not from weakness but from genuine strength, of his sense of humour, of his real humility. I think we can sum up the feeling of all of us in saying that we have lost a friend and a Father. There would be no need for concern about the 'evils of paternalism' if all invested with authority learned from Bishop Henschke how he used his power to serve his people with sincerity, unselfishness, humility and genuine love. He understood well the saying of Our Lord, 'Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who

wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'.

Today then we sorrow at the loss of a great and wonderful man. We feel, however, a real happiness, for our Christian faith tells us that such a man must be rewarded by the Master he served so well. Let us remember the soul of Bishop Henschke asking God's merciful judgement upon him: let us thank God for the gift that he gave us in the life and person of Francis Augustin Henschke, Bishop of Wagga Wagga—'a great High Priest who in his day pleased God'.

THE INSIDE SAILORS

by H. V. Evans

A Paper read to the Society by H. V. Evans on 13 April 1965.

I must admit that I face you tonight in some trepidation for, although I have been interested for some years in the story of the river steamers and of the men who sailed in them—the 'inside sailors' as they have been called—I realise only too well that the more I learn about them the more there is to learn. Tonight in particular I find myself in a quandary, for I come as an outsider to a place where people have a personal interest in and some memories of my subject.

Now you may ask how it is that I, a comparative newcomer to Australia, should be so interested in steamer traffic on the Murray-Darling system. My interest began soon after I landed in Australia, a little more than ten years ago, when a friend remarked upon a sign he had seen on an old building in Bourke—'Mr So-and-So, General Storekeeper and Shipowner'. A shipowner in Bourke! How ridiculous! Whose leg did he think he was pulling? And yet, was it so very impossible? Is not Bourke on the Darling? A long way up the Darling, admittedly, but nevertheless on that great inland river. My doubts were soon settled by a visit to the Public Library where I consulted a copy of Dr Bean's excellent book *Dreadnought of the Darling*, which told me that Bourke had once been a thriving river port—one among many river ports which in their heyday had served a fleet of over 200 boats and barges on whom had depended the livelihood of half the continent.

My interest was further aroused by reading E. J. Brady's book *River Rovers*, in which he described a trip he and a colleague had made in a launch from Albury along the Murray for the magazine *Lone Hand*. Some time later I found myself in Echuca, one of the river ports he described. There, to my delight, I saw not one but several river craft, the remains of a huge wharf (Echuca was once the second largest port in Victoria) and such relics as an old timber-jinker, with its solid wheels cut from the butts of huge redgum logs.