



Speech by

**JULIE ATTWOOD**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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Hansard 31 July 2001

**ARCHBISHOP RUSH**

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.31 p.m.): Saturday, 21 July 2001 was a sad day for members of the Catholic Church across Queensland. It was the day that the former Archbishop of Brisbane, Francis Robert Rush, passed away and left this earth for a better place. Last Friday, over 1,000 people gathered at St Stephen's Cathedral in Brisbane to celebrate the life and mourn the death of this great Catholic leader. Included in the gathering was Deputy Premier, Terry Mackenroth; Opposition Leader, Mike Horan; the Governor; and Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley. Archbishop Bathurst officiated at the solemn mass and bishops and priests from all over Queensland gathered around the altar.

About 10 years ago Archbishop Rush retired to Verona Villa in the Canossa complex. For the past three years I had the great honour of being his local member, and often spent time with him talking through issues. It felt good being in the presence of such a wise, intelligent and very spiritual human being. He would talk freely and openly on any subject and everything mattered to him. What emerged from our conversations was a great sense of compassion that he had for every living being.

Up until about 12 months ago, Archbishop Rush continued to preach in the Canossa chapel. Following a stroke, he was unable to continue with this aspect of his ministry. Archbishop Rush would read the message for the day in Italian for the benefit of residents in the complex and then proceed in articulating stories of the past relevant to current living. Everyone in the chapel took away something that they did not have before.

Archbishop Rush had a thirst for knowledge and was widely read. He is remembered for his brilliant mind, his remarkable memory, and his affection for his family, his archdiocese, his church and his faith in Jesus Christ. His episcopal motto sums up his life and his faith: *mihi vivere Christus*—life for me is Christ. During his whole life he enacted that motto.

Archbishop Rush was born in Townsville on 11 September 1916. He was educated at St Joseph's School and the Christian Brothers School in Townsville; St Joseph's, Gregory Terrace; and Mount Carmel, Charters Towers. His seminary formation began at St Columba's, Springwood, New South Wales and was completed in Rome. After many years serving as parish priest, then bishop, he was installed as Archbishop of Brisbane on 29 May 1973, where he remained until his retirement on 3 December 1991.

I know that Archbishop Rush will be sadly missed, especially by Sister Concetta and her Canossan sisters at Oxley. People from all walks of life who have had the privilege of meeting him will fondly remember him as a great Queenslander. His kindness, wisdom and compassion for others was what made him a great human being and leader in the church. May his memory inspire us all to give a little bit of ourselves in the pursuit of greater compassion towards others.

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