

Friends of Caroline Chisholm

NEWSLETTER

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The articles in this issue build on those in issue #5 of the Newsletter and draw out the implications of their respective subjects. The first goes further in substantiating the assessment of Caroline Chisholm's having forged a new path regarding the Church's social doctrine. It does so by examining how her work exemplified "the foundational and abiding principles of the Church's social doctrine" (cf. issue #5).

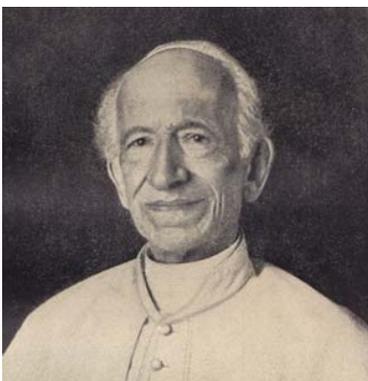
In her 2003 paper *Caroline Chisholm — Prophet of the Laity*, Clara Geoghegan writes that Mrs Chisholm was in advance of *Rerum*

Novarum's teaching on the social justice issues of a family wage; private ownership of family farms, and freedom to migrate.

The article on the Dorroughs takes the family story into the early 20th Century, more than 70 years after Mrs Chisholm had selected them for the Shellharbour scheme. It gave them a sure footing as new settlers. Like so many others, they prospered materially. James Dorrough, the youngest child, appears to have grown quite wealthy. The article ends with reflections on the dissimilarity with Caroline and Archibald Chisholm, who died in relative poverty.

Mrs Chisholm and the Church's New 19th Century Paths

An article in the previous Newsletter outlined something of the development of the Church's social doctrine in the latter part of the 19th Century and summarized its foundational and permanent principles. It related that the papal magisterium commenced with Pope Leo XIII's aptly-named *Rerum Novarum* [On the New Things] in 1891, and that the Pope privately acknowledged indebtedness to Bishop Wilhelm Von Ketteler, whose "Christian Labour Catechism" was an influential resource for many bishops, priests and lay leaders in the Church.



Pope Leo XIII

Late 1890s (?) portrait by Franz Von Lenbach, reproduced in Edwin Emerson Jr, *A History of the Nineteenth Century*, P.F. Collier and Son, New York, 1901, vol. 3, facing page 1590.

The Pope distinctly set out "a new path" [cf. *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, page 49], but it followed one blazed by the Bishop's earlier study, his consultations and reflections on pastoral and social experience, and his publications.

The article proposed that Caroline Chisholm's work for social reform was a third new path, and alluded to her emigration activities in particular and to her emphasis on the practical. It claimed, without substantiating detail, that the Church's social doctrine principles are "unmistakably evident", though not articulated in precisely the same way as the teaching Church has done.

The present article amplifies this line of thought, extending it to the four principles advanced in the *Compendium*: the inviolable dignity of the human person; the common good; subsidiarity; and solidarity. (A fuller explanation of these was given in the previous article, which drew on the source's Chapter 4.)

Mrs Chisholm's understanding of the inviolable dignity of the human person is not explicitly stated in her extant writings. Contemporaries initially resorted to words like "humane" and "humanitarian", and later to "philanthropy" and

(continued on page 2)

Mrs Chisholm and the Church's New 19th Century Paths (continued)

“philanthropist”, when portraying her advocacy and actions in the interests of others. Later again, Christian epithets came more to the fore. Probably because her Christian motivation was so integrated and so strong, her personal understanding of the principle of human dignity was simple (in the sense of being uncomplicated), as well as being scriptural in origin and often put as a moral imperative.

Two of these characteristics can be seen in the opening paragraphs of her Female *Immigration Considered*, where she explains how she came to set up the Bent Street home in 1841. Flora, who “was all innocence”, was at risk of seduction (and, as things proved, abandonment), and that was cause enough for Mrs Chisholm to want to help. The moral imperative she felt to act for vulnerable strangers was reinforced by her lack of success in Flora's case.

Mrs Chisholm's key scriptural reference, recorded five years later when she responded to a sectarian attack, is to the Good Samaritan. Like him, she did not theorize or hypothesize, but saw clearly, judged rightly and acted well.

The principle of the common good was at the core of Caroline Chisholm's social reforms. To “serve all” was her expressed intention for the Bent Street home, and that is what happened there, extending to all denominations and then beyond single females to family groups and single males. Thereafter, this broad inclusiveness was apparent in the larger improvements in emigration arrangements she undertook or promoted and the small scale initiatives like the shelter sheds in gold-rush Victoria.

There was no intention of personal gain for herself, her family or her social class and religious community. The good of all was her objective, and this was realised in most every respect, taking into account the constraints and circumstances of the period. A critic might, for example, suggest that Mrs Chisholm's backing for opening the lands was as much an attack on the squatters as support for emigrant families with little capital but hopes for settling on their own farm. Be that as it may, she intended and energetically worked for the good of the community as a whole.

A specific instance of Caroline Chisholm's implementation of the principle of subsidiarity is the system of country emigration depots. From the outset in 1841-42, she encouraged leaders in regional towns to organise suitable accommodation for newly arrived emigrants and workers from Sydney and to facilitate their employment in the local area.

Another specific instance is her campaign to raise subscriptions for a hearse to convey with decency the bodies of the “friendless poor” to their graves, instead of using the “nuisance” cart for that purpose (“nuisance” included carcasses of dead animals). The appeal was directed at the general public in Sydney, not to the colonial or imperial governments.

A third instance is the financial structure of the Family Colonization Loan Society which, once operational with seeding funds for loans, was framed on self-help and mutual assistance among those seeking to emigrate. However, Mrs Chisholm did press the imperial government to pay the ship's passage for children left behind by its own policies of transportation and the bounty system, allowing them to be reunited with their families in Australia. It had an obligation to pay, in her view.

The principle of solidarity is very evident in Caroline Chisholm's work for social reform and in her known acts of charity. She, and her husband and family were as one with those they were assisting. Their home at Windsor outside Sydney was a refuge for young women from their early years in the Colony, just as their Islington home in London doubled as a vibrant migration centre. Children and youngsters travelling on their own were put in the charge of particular families, just as single young women were placed in employment situations where they could be shielded from importuning.

Caroline Chisholm pioneered a new form of committed Christian discipleship: lay, married, and actively involved in the world for a fairer, better functioning society. This was a new path of social doctrine which emphasised praxis and service.

Rodney Stinson

More about the Dorrough family and Mrs Chisholm

The previous Newsletter looked at Mrs Chisholm's settlement in December, 1843 of 30 families on clearing leases in the Shellharbour district, south of Sydney. It focused on one of those families: the Dorroughs.

Matthew and Martha Dorrough and their five children prospered, the four older children marrying and farming on their own land locally and Matthew building a sturdy house on his own property at Dapto in 1857, which still stood 100 years later, according to the family history, *Matthew Dorrough — Illawarra Pioneer*. After 15 years on the original clearing lease allotment, Matthew and Martha moved to their new Dapto home. There they continued to farm successfully, even establishing, it is said, a kind of stud for the breeding of Australian Illawarra Shorthorn dairy cattle.

James, the youngest of the family, married in 1864. He, his wife and their young family lived with his parents for a while, before going to land he had purchased at Kangaloon, on the edge of the Southern Highlands. James and his brother John had adjoining blocks, and both proved to be hard working and entrepreneurial. *The Empire* newspaper of 21 August, 1869 reported they were the contractors who built the village's new public school and teacher's residence at a cost of £300. The family history also mentions John had a "steam-driven wood-sawing engine", which would have been used in the timber mill he operated with James.

Martha's health began to deteriorate during the 1860s, leading to her death in April, 1869 at Kangaloon. While the family history gives the direct cause as thrombosis, the death certificate has "Paralytic Stroke". Widower Matthew afterwards stayed with James and his family, moving with them to the Lismore area in 1882, where John had gone a year or two before [sources: *Northern Star* newspaper, 25 August, 1897 and 22 August, 1903, and family history].

Matthew died in 1897; the death certificate cited "Croupous Pneumonia". His newspaper obituary refers only briefly to the Shellharbour years that were the springboard to the family's material wealth. No mention was made of his fortuitous selection by Mrs Chisholm to join the clearing land group in 1843. Matthew himself had retained little enough from his past multiple land holdings, judging from the valuation of £598 for his sole property at North Lismore, more than half of which was mortgaged to the bank [source: probate and valuation file, reel 3026, State Archives]. But he left a rich lineage, his offspring producing 35 grandchildren and 60 great grandchildren, at the time of his death.

James' and John's surname makes them easier to track in the historical records than their married sisters. These indicate their increasing wealth and social influence as they passed into and beyond middle age in the Lismore area. John returned to building and contracting,

(continued on page 4)



Photographs of Martha and Matthew from the family history are reproduced here with permission. They were probably taken in the 1860s. The red colouring of the flowers next to Martha was added by a later hand. Matthew's obituary described him as a life-long and "staunch Wesleyan", and the book on the stand in his photograph is likely to be a bible.



More about the Dorrrough family and Mrs Chisholm (continued)

while James started a sawmill, equipping it with “up-to-date” plant, including “a 100-horse-power Canadian Waterous engine and boiler (the first of its kind in Australia)” [source: *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 27 April, 1904].

James went on to operate a sugar mill, had interests in dairying, and then passed the sawmill to his son Charles in 1896. He also had what we nowadays call investment properties. He sold one of them at Molesworth Street in Lismore for the sizeable sum of £4,000 [source: *Northern Star*, 27 July, 1909].

Despite acquiring wealth and being in his mid-sixties, James had not lost an adventurous spirit. He acquired and learned to drive a “motor buggy”, becoming “an experienced motorist”. The local newspaper relates how, on Good Friday in 1912, he skillfully avoided a serious accident with two larger vehicles, only to have one tyre “slip off” and another hit a large rock. James and his wife were thrown from the buggy, which continued in motion, taking with it a grandchild and an adult friend. The injured James collected his wits, moved quickly and regained control of the runaway buggy. The two recovered, James living on to 1931, though his wife died in 1914.

The Dorrroughs were one of 30 families given a new start by Caroline Chisholm through the Shellharbour scheme. They were one of thousands of families she helped directly in her 1840s settlement initiatives in New South Wales, and one among the many more families she assisted, directly and indirectly, through her later emigration activities such as effecting reforms in shipboard arrangements,

promoting passage as a family unit and organizing the Family Colonization Loan Society.

The significance of the family unit in a land of opportunity can be seen in the 1845-46 Voluntary Statements Caroline and Archibald gathered from settlers. Their life in Australia contrasted with the poverty and limited prospects they left behind. Families could own their own home, farm, cattle, sheep, and poultry, send money back to those less fortunate, and educate their children. They were happier and doing well materially.

Caroline and Archibald never owned their own home or an investment property. In retirement, they depended on his army pension and (later) a government pension for Caroline. They had educated and supported their children into adulthood. They were good parents, but they died with few material possessions and no financial assets to leave their descendants.

Caroline’s realised vocation was, as Archibald phrased it, to work for improvements in the whole field of emigration. He gave her unstinting support and encouragement. Robert Lowe’s poem personified Caroline as “the generous and the good” who “labors still for Heaven”, not for earthly gain [*Spectator* (Sydney), 23 February, 1846]. What he wrote of Caroline is equally true for Archibald – and for that countless families ought be grateful.

Reference sources: Elsie Macdonald and Colin Macdonald, *Matthew Dorrrough — Illawarra Pioneer*, self-published, Aranda, 1991; online State Archives; National Library of Australia’s Trove historical newspapers; and NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages online historical records.

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End-note: There are only a limited number of original images of Caroline Chisholm. Some present her very attractively, such as the Thomas Fairland lithograph, which is reproduced on the prayer card. Fairland relied on A. C. Hayter’s oil painting, which was believed lost. It has been found, and an article on the Hayter is planned for a forthcoming Newsletter.