A pioneer businessman who ‘caught the vision splendid’

Entering St Christopher’s Cathedral through the side door and walking towards the sanctuary you will observe at the base of a stained glass window the inscription Pray for the soul of Stanley Cusack.

As a young priest of the parish in the 1960s, I frequently observed Stan kneeling not far from that spot at weekday Mass. His deeply held Catholic faith and his loyalty to St Christopher’s Parish manifested themselves in all kinds of ways. Stan Cusack’s origins were in Yass where he was elected Mayor in 1933 before moving to Canberra in 1935.

It was not surprising to find him in local government given that his father, J J Cusack, served as a Labor member in the NSW Parliament and was member for Eden-Monaro in the Federal Parliament.

One of Stan’s duties as mayor of Yass was to welcome the Duke of Gloucester as he passed through the town. Stan Cusack’s work ethic was as widely acclaimed as was his devotion as a Catholic.

An historical paper lists staff who appreciated his kindness and loyalty as they built up a loyal clientele of customers and his “human” way as he became less important.”

Despite strong competition from multi-nationals, Cusacks remained in the family business for decades. The family funeral business has been his family. Arguably, Stan Cusack’s greatest legacy to Canberra has been his family.

Ann Jaeger (nee Cusack) writing the Cusack family history reflects that “there would surely agree. She quotes Stan’s second wife, Mary, speaking of her inherited family, “I have 19 grandchildren, and not a dud one amongst them.” Stan would surely agree.

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