

The Parish of the Durham Martyrs

Incorporating the churches of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Godric,
St. Joseph and St. Bede



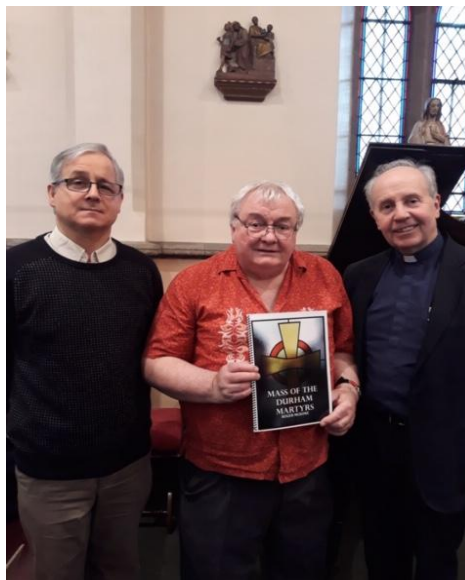
The Parish of the Durham Martyrs

Our worshipping community was established with the construction of the church of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Godric in 1864, in order to help the Church supply extra capacity to St. Cuthbert's Church for the growing Catholic population of the city. As the City continued to grow, the Church of St. Bede's was constructed to serve Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall, and a separate parish was formed when St. Joseph's Church was built to serve the growing population at Gilesgate.

In 2013, due to the reduced number of clergy in our diocese and in order to function more effectively in our ministry, it was decided to merge the Parish of Our Lady of Mercy, St. Godric and St. Bede with the Parish of St. Joseph, under the continued guidance of the Fr. Colm Hayden, who had previously been the parish priest of both parishes. We decided that our new parish would be named in honour of the many Catholics martyred for their faith in Durham during the Protestant Reformation. Since then we have continued to flourish as one community living out the Gospel not only in our three churches but as one Church across the city joined with our brethren throughout the world in The Holy Catholic Church.

We come together as one community to celebrate the great feasts of Christmas and Easter in St. Leonard's School, helping us to truly unite to celebrate these great feasts of the liturgical year

We are very fortunate to have our own Durham Martyr's Mass setting, composed by Roger McCone, a parishioner and one of our music leads. The Mass setting was first performed in our parish in 2018 when we celebrated our fifth anniversary.



Roger with Fr. Colm and Fr. Stephen at the inauguration of his Mass Setting

About the Durham Martyrs



St. John Boste – Carving by Michael Doyle in St. Godric's Church

During the Religious Persecution of the 16th and 17th Century, 315 of our Catholic ancestors were executed. Of these 26 have links with the area now forming our diocese, and many more were executed in our city. Many were priests, who having been ordained abroad, returned to England as a priest, which was considered high treason punishable by being hung, drawn and quartered. Others helped to shelter the priests, a felony punishable by imprisonment, fines, confiscation of property and in many cases death.

It is in memory and honour of these men and their faith that we dedicate our parish:

Blessed Thomas Plumtree –Martyred 4th January 1570

Bl. Thomas Plumtree began studies at Christ Church College, University of Oxford in 1543 and in 1546 was made rector of Stubton, Lincolnshire, during the Catholic 'Rising of the North' he resigned his prebend and became preacher of the rebels. In 1569 he celebrated a Mass in Durham Cathedral in which he reconciled conformers to the Catholic Church. When the revolt failed he was arrested and after refusing to denounce his faith he was executed in Durham on 4th of January 1570. He was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886.

The Blessed Edmund Duke, Richard Hill, Richard Holiday and John Hogg – Martyred 28th May 1590.

Often referred to as the Dryburne Martyrs due to their execution site. They were four missionary priests, trained at the English College in Rheim, although Duke was

moved to the English College in Rome following his ordination to minor orders. All were ordained to the priesthood in 1589 before being sent back to England as missionary priests in 1590, however the fact they stayed together so much of the time aroused suspicion and they were arrested shortly afterwards. Following a trial they were executed at Dryburne in Durham on the 28th of May 1590 and were beatified in 1987 by Pope John Paul II.

Blessed John Speed – Martyred 4th February 1594

A Catholic layman who was arrested for assisting St. John Boste, escorting him from house to house. Following his arrest, he turned down several incentives to conform with the Church of England and was executed on 4th February 1594, he was beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1929.

Saint John Boste – Martyred 24th July 1594

Born c.1544 in Westmoreland, St. John Boste studied at Queen's College, Oxford where he later became a fellow. After converting to Catholicism in 1576, he trained as a priest in Rheims, France and was ordained in 1681. He returned to Northern England as a missionary priest and was betrayed to the authorities near Durham in 1593 and was taken to the Tower of London for interrogation, before being returned to Durham where he was executed at Dryburn on 24th July 1594. In 1970 he was canonised by Pope Paul VI as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales. The Chapel at St. Leonard's School is dedicated in his honour.

The Blessed Thomas Palaser, John Norton and John Talbot – Martyred 9th August 1600

Bl. Thomas Palaser was a Catholic Priest, who having trained in Valladolid and Rheims was ordained in 1596. He was arrested at the Gateshead home of Bl. John Norton while praying, along with Bl. John Talbot and Norton's wife, while the wife was later released due to pregnancy, Palaser, Norton and Talbot were executed in Durham on 9th August 1600. The group were beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1987.

In remembering our martyrs who died in the persecutions over 400 years ago, we must also remember all those who still today fear violence, persecution, torture and other violations of their human rights to this day.

Blessed martyrs of our city ...orate pro nobis

Our Churches :-

Our Lady of Mercy and St. Godric



The Church of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Godric is our Grade II listed church located in Durham City Centre.

The church has accessible toilet facilities; a hearing aid loop system and guide dogs are welcome. Provision has been made for wheelchairs at various points within the church.

Sunday Mass is celebrated at 9.00am, usually accompanied by the church choir , and weekday services (Word and Communion or Holy Mass celebrated by Mill Hill Missionaries) usually take place at 10.00am.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place Monday to Saturday afternoons from 2.00pm to 3.00pm and on Sundays from 3.00pm to 4.00pm and 9.30am – 10.00am on Thursday mornings before Mass.

The church regularly plays host to a variety of concerts and open events including Heritage Open Days, Durham Lumiere and this year, the Celtic Summer School.

In 2014 the parish celebrated the 150th anniversary of the construction of the church with Mass officiated by Bishop Seamus Cunningham.

The church is approximately 130 feet long with a tower at the West end containing the main entrance. It consists of a nave with an aisle and side chapel at the North

end. The pillars between the nave and North aisle are made of Aberdeen granite. Three confessionals are built into the wall on the South side of the church, and the style of architecture is early Gothic Revival.

Of special interest are the stained glass windows, the high altar and the evocative black Stations of the Cross memorials of the fire in 1985. The Saint John Boste Room boasts a sculpture of the martyr by Frederick Lawson. Scenes from the life of St. Godric are depicted in the windows above the high altar. The small chapel dedicated to Our Blessed Lady contain a beautiful stained glass window of worshipping angels. After the fire, much of the glass in the church was restored but newly designed stained glass windows, illuminated in the evenings, were added in the tower.

A brief history:-

St. Godric of Finchale was born in Norfolk c. 1065. He followed a life as a trader and seafarer, going as far as Rome and Jerusalem. He became a hermit at Finchale in the Parish. In 2015 our parish community joined with ecumenical efforts across the city to celebrate 900 years since St. Godric arrived in Durham. He died in the year 1170 aged 105.

During the nineteenth century St. Cuthbert's in Old Elvet was the parish church for all Catholics in Durham City. By the middle of the century, however it became clear that it was inadequate for the growing Catholic community in Durham and the erection of another church had been contemplated for some time.. Their numbers had been swollen by the influx of a large number of Irish Catholic workers who came in in 1857, to build amongst other things, the railway cutting at Redhills and the viaduct across North Road that stands within one hundred meters of the church.

The Very Rev. Ralph Platt, D.D., Provost of the Cathedral chapter and Vicar General of the Diocese, became parish priest at St. Cuthbert's in 1857 and entrusted the raising of funds for the establishment of the new parish first to the Rev. Robert Belany and then in 1862, to the Rev. P.T. Mathews, curate at St Cuthbert's who was made responsible for the general development of the proposed new parish. Many subscriptions were received in response to Provost Platt's appeals and one was said to amount to £1000.

The site for St. Godric's was purchased by Provost Platt in 1858 for the sum £1800 and in 1861 to provide a temporary church he made the bold move of purchasing the Wheatsheaf Inn, Framwellgate, formerly a coaching inn, and converted its large dining room into a temporary chapel. So great were the numbers to be accommodated that it was necessary to build a wooden extension in the garden adjoining this room.

About the same time a large building behind the houses on the opposite side of Framwellgate was purchased for use as a Catholic elementary school. This school

and St. Cuthbert's school, then recently built behind Old Elvet, were both put in charge of a community of Sisters of Mercy who came from Sunderland and their convent was established in the former Wheatsheaf Inn.

The original plans for the church as prepared by Edward Pugin, included a tower with a spire though the tower was not added until 1909.

The foundation stone was laid on Whit Monday 1863 by Bishop William Hogarth, who was the first Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle diocese after the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850.

Work on the church proceeded rapidly and in less than a year the sanctuary, side chapels, sacristies and rather more than half the contemplative nave and aisle were completed.

The solemn opening ceremony took place on Tuesday, the 15th November 1864, and was attended by the Mayor of Durham and other distinguished visitors. The church was filled to capacity by a large congregation. "This fact is the most noteworthy", remarked the Advertiser in its account of the occasion, "inasmuch as those desirous of attending were required to pay for admission, the charges being – reserved seats – 10/-; other seats 5/- and 2/6p." The service which lasted two hours, was brought to a close with the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "Messiah". The collection realised about £100 – a significant sum at that time.

St Godric's was first served from St. Cuthbert's but when the community of Sisters of Mercy left the parish in 1868, their convent was converted into a residence for the priest of St. Godric's. Fr. Robert Pattison, then newly ordained, was the first resident priest, subject however to the rector of St. Cuthbert's.

Fr. Pattison was transferred to Penrith in 1869 and was succeeded by Fr. John Nolan. In September 1872, Fr. Nolan was moved to St. Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle, and Fr. William Perrin became the new parish priest.

In May 1883, Fr. Perrin was transferred to Millom in Cumberland and his predecessor at Millom, Fr. Gregory Austin Jones, came to St. Godric's. Fr. Jones remained at St Godric's for nearly eleven years, during which time he became a much respected figure. He died at St. Godric's on Easter Sunday, 25th March 1894 at the age of forty three. During his time in Durham he had done great work, not only in his pastoral duties in the parish but also in the public life of the city, where he was greatly esteemed for his work in the homes of the poor and afflicted for his eloquent and effective preaching.

On the 12th May 1894, Fr. Robert Thornton was appointed parish priest at St. Godric's where he was to remain for almost forty years. Upon arrival, Fr. Thornton set to work immediately to pay off the debt on the church and then to collect money for the erection of new schools. So effective was his fund raising that the debt was paid off entirely by 1897. This represents a wonderful response by the parishioners to

his appeal for contributions, but there can be little doubt that Fr. Thornton himself contributed handsomely from his own means.

St Godric's was often referred to as the 'penny church' due to the fact that it was paid for by subscription mainly from local, working class Catholic families.

During his first years of ministry at St. Godric's, Fr. Thornton was busy with a number of other projects as well. Early in 1895 a monument in memory of Fr. Jones was erected over his grave in St. Bede's cemetery and in August 1895, the Baptismal Font was erected in the church, also as a memorial to Fr. Jones. Both were provided out of funds specially collected for the purpose.

A number of Fr. Jones's clerical friends and fellow-students at college and some members of the congregation as a further memorial also contributed to the purchase of a tabernacle. When the new high altar was erected in 1914 by Canon Thornton in memory of his parents, out of the money left to him by his father, the marble and alabaster were elaborately carved and fitted to receive this tabernacle, which was first erected in February 1895, and has been in use ever since .

The stained glass window in the side wall of the Lady Chapel, depicting the coronation of Our Lady in Heaven, was provided out of a bequest of £50 left for this purpose in 1895 by Thomas Madden , who also left a sum of £20 to be spent on the decoration of the Lady altar.

The organ was installed at a cost of £150 in January 1895, and was formally opened on Tuesday 19th February 1895, when Mr. E. Harding gave a twenty minute organ recital both before and after Benediction.

The contract for the extension and completion of the church was signed in July 1908 and work began the following month. In July 1909 the church was closed for a week when the old West gable wall was taken down and Mass was said in the school during this time.

On the 26th September 1909, the statue of St. Godric, placed in the niche in the corner of the new tower near the entrance to the porch, was solemnly blessed after the last Mass. The solemn re-opening of the church took place on Wednesday, the 27th October, 1909.

The stained glass window in the Baptistry, representing the Baptism of Our Lord, was installed in January 1913, in memory of Edward Gannen, formerly a member of Durham City Council, by his widow who also presented the other stained glass window in the Baptistry, which was installed the following April.

In June 1914, Canon Thornton announced a donation of £2 from a parishioner to start a fund for the provision of a new pulpit in honour of the jubilee of the church the following November, but the outbreak of war in August 1914, Made any celebration of the jubilee impractical.

At the beginning of January 1915, the news came of the first parishioner to fall in action – Joseph Kinsley of Framwellgate Moor. Thereafter, week by week there were Masses and prayers said for the ever-growing numbers of those who had left the parish and suffered imprisonment, wounds or death in the service of their country. The first suggestion of a parish war memorial was made by Cannon Thornton in 1916. The proposal was revived in 1922 and the war memorial that stands outside of the church was unveiled on Sunday 13th May 1923.

Also in 1923, electric lighting was installed in the church. Special contributions were requested towards the expense of the installation. Prior to that it had been lit by gaslight, twin lights being fixed to the centre of some of the benches.

In October 1929, Canon Thornton became ill and was unable to officiate again until February 1930. He fell ill again in April 1933 and was unable to officiate for six months. He made a slight recovery and was able to recommence his duties for a few weeks during the winter but sadly he collapsed again and died in February 1934. During his time with the parish he was not only dedicated to his pastoral duties and its growth but was also active in the promotion and development of catholic schools and education for the poor.

Many parishioners at St. Godric's could not remember any other parish priest and to all his death meant not only the loss of a greatly revered spiritual father but also the end of an era, as it were, in the parish and in their own lives. In 1934, a screen was erected in the Lady Chapel and re-decoration work was carried out there in memorial to Canon Thornton.

Monsignor James Mc Shane succeeded Canon Thornton in 1934 and immediately undertook organisation of a number of practical measures including the cleaning of the organ, and repairs and renovation of the church. By May 1936, Mgr. McShane was planning for the re-consecration of the Church and he announced that the Bishop had provisionally agreed to come for this purpose the following Whit Monday. Unfortunately, however, although he worked so hard in the preparation for this event, he did not live to see the consecration of the church.

Mgr. McShane died in March 1937. He was a man of outstanding personality and his career was varied and distinguished. Before coming to St. Godric's he was parish priest Willington Quay and earlier he had been Vice-Rector of the Beda College, Rome. His bravery in the performance of his duties as a military chaplain during the First World War was twice mentioned in despatches and he was awarded the Military Cross.



Mgr. McShane as Papal Chamberlain

Mgr. McShane was succeeded by Fr. Joseph Whittaker whose service was tragically brief, being terminated by his death at the age of forty two after a short illness in August 1937. He was the catalyst which resulted in the start of a Legion of Mary in the parish. He was a very devout priest and each evening, before retiring for the night, he spent a long time in the darkened church, praying before the Blessed Sacrament. Fr. Whittaker was replaced by Canon G.B. Pippett at the end of August 1937.

During August 1950, Canon Pippett called for volunteers to tidy up the cemetery and asked them to report at 2pm each Saturday with their own tools, ready to work. This happened again in 1951.

July 1954 marked the Golden Jubilee of Canon Pippett's ordination but unfortunately he was not well enough to say the Jubilee Mass which was celebrated by his cousin, Fr. Austin Pippett. Dr. McReavy of Ushaw College preached the sermon. In the evening a presentation was made to the Canon. The following week his condition worsened and on 1st August prayers were said for his recovery. He had to go to hospital and although he was able to return to the presbytery in April 1955, his health did not recover and he died on 9th July 1955.

Canon Pippett had endured protracted ill-health with exemplary patience but though of frail physique, he had always a natural air of authority which commanded the attention and respect of his people. Despite his grave and venerable presence he

had a great understanding and love of children. His memory is greatly revered in the parish.

Fr. Costello came to St Godric's as parish priest in September 1955 and in November 1955 announced that the Church Hall to be built at Framwellgate Moor would be Canon Pippett's memorial. The consecration of St. Godric's church took place on 23rd September 1959. In dedicating the church and its site to the service of God for ever, Bishop Cunningham completed and confirmed the action of Bishop Hogarth and Provost Platt in purchasing the site in 1858 for the erection of a church.

In October 1960, one of the windows in the sanctuary was damaged by a gale and for a while the window had to be boarded up. It was repaired in October 1960, at a cost of £247 which was raised by the Catholic Women's League by September 1961.

In March 1963, Fr. Costello was ill and for a while was in hospital. He recovered in April and was able to officiate but fell ill again in October and died on 8th November 1963.

Fr. F. Rice became parish priest shortly before Easter 1964. Soon after taking up his duty he formed a Men's Association to assist him in the practical business of the church as well as to promote the spiritual and social welfare of its members.

With the cooperation of the Men's Association and of the Men's Praesidium of the Legion of Mary which he established in 1964, Fr. Rice conducted a survey of the parish during the summer and early autumn with a view to introducing a new system of collecting parishioners' offerings for the maintenance of the church and the obligations of the parish. These included provision of a new school, church hall and church at Framwellgate Moor, the enlargement of St. Leonard's School and the erection of St. Bede's School at Lanchester. The new system came into operation on the first Sunday of Advent, 28th November 1964, under which parishioners as they entered the church on Sundays handed in their offerings in specially provided envelopes, which were carried up to the altar with the Offertory – all collections in the church except those occasionally prescribed by order of the Bishop having been discontinued.

In January 1985 the church was badly damaged by fire. The roof and organ were destroyed and serious damage was caused as rafters fell into the body of the church.

As news of the fire spread many people sent donations from all parts of the country. After insurance the parishioners had to raise over £100,000. The restoration of the church was undertaken by parishioners with great vigour. Many events were undertaken with help coming from all sorts of unlikely sources. For example, an auction was arranged and Her Majesty the Queen Mother sent a clock to be added to the sale. Whilst very tragic, the fire was a great boost to churches working together in the city with an immediate offer from St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church in

North Road, of the use of the church building for Catholic Services. This offer was made whilst St. Godric's church was burning!

The church was repaired by 1987 and still contains some of the smoke damaged items saved from the fire, including Stations of the Cross.

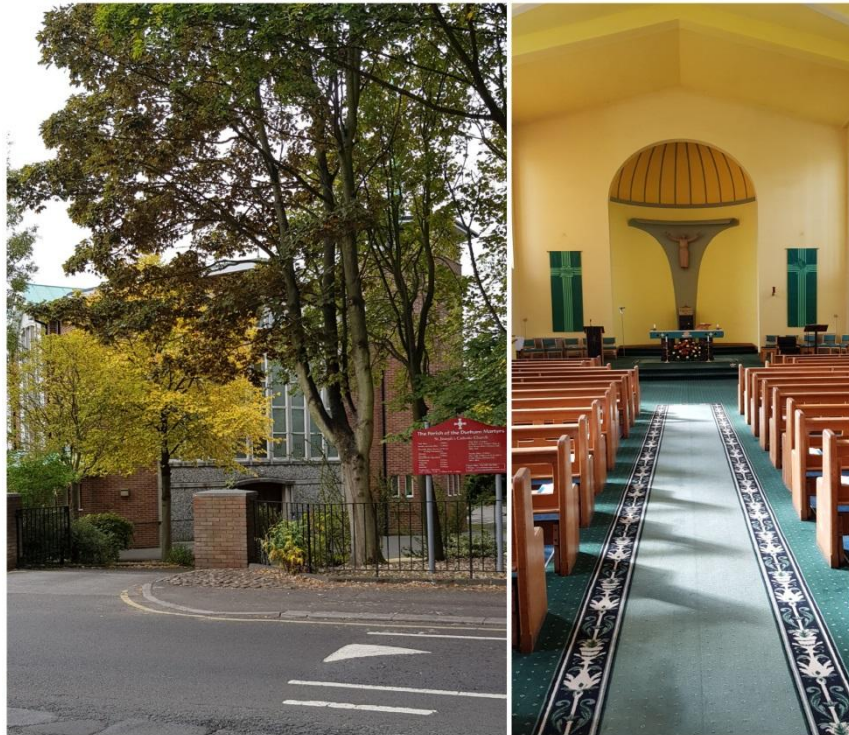


St. Godric's immediately after the fire

Fr Rice diligently led to restoration project and remained as Parish priest until 1989 when he retired and was replaced by Fr. Gordon Ryan who served the parish until the year 2000.

Fr Ryan was replaced in 2000 by Fr. Adrian Tuckwell who remained with us for seven years before being transferred to another parish. Fr Tuckwell was replaced by Fr. Barrie McKenzie who remained with us for two years when Fr. Colm Hayden joined us.

St. Joseph's



The site of St Joseph's Church on Mill Lane, Gilesgate also incorporates the Parish Presbytery, offices and two group meeting rooms with catering facilities.

The church was built in the 1960's and is a light, bright modern building. It has a car park with designated disabled spaces and ramp access to the building, accessible toilets and hearing aid facilities are provided and guide dogs are welcome to all services. Carpet colour differentiation is also used throughout the church to aid people with a visual impairment.

Vigil Mass is celebrated at 5.00pm on Saturday evening and Sunday Mass is celebrated at 11am. and weekday services (Word and Communion or Holy Mass) usually take place at 9.15am Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament followed by Holy Communion usually takes place at 6.30pm on Tuesday evenings.

The church hosts a monthly Memory Café for people and their carers living with dementia: regular lunch and film clubs and our youth ministry events.

A brief history:-

St. Joseph is the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and is venerated throughout the Catholic Church. He is venerated both as husband of Mary and as St. Joseph the Worker. In 1870 Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church.

From the mid 1800's until the early 1900's the local population grew very rapidly due to the influx of Irish workers. During this period the people of Gilesgate attended

Mass at St. Cuthbert's Church in the city centre and their children attended the parish school.

In the 1930's the Sherburn Road and Sunderland Road estates were built to accommodate the occupants of the old condemned houses on the Durham riverbanks, which were demolished. The point was reached where St. Cuthbert's could no longer accommodate the larger population in the church or the school.

St. Joseph's Parish was founded in 1937 and, to begin with, arrangements were made by Fr. W. I. Meagher the parish priest of St. Cuthbert's for Mass to be held in the old Crescent Cinema on Marshall Terrace. The same building was used for fundraising activities for a proposed dual purpose hall in Mill Lane. Fr Meagher carried responsibility for this development and the hall was duly built in 1939 (the existing St. Joseph's school hall). It had a raised platform at one end for the altar, with a room either side, one for the priest and one for the altar servers.

This was a remarkable achievement and great improvement for the adults but the children would continue to walk to school in Old Elvet for many years to come. No school buses then!

For Fr. Meagher and his succession of curates, Fr. J O'Brien, Fr. J Vokes and Fr. Jennings it was considerable additional work, walking up from Old Elvet to Gilesgate Moor for the services each week during those difficult wartime years, but towards the end of the war the pressure eased with the purchase by Fr. Meagher of a parish car to help serve St. Joseph's. By this time the Parish was growing rapidly and had reached its 1000mark.

In 1948 the parish was separated. Fr. Jennings left Old Elvet to found a new parish at Chilton and Fr. James Kenny was appointed the first parish priest, moving into Fr. Meagher's most recent acquisition, no 4 North View, Sunderland Road, as his presbytery.

Fr. Kenny inherited a considerable parish debt and faced an uphill struggle to develop the parish. In 1952 he built a new presbytery on the Mill Lane site, allowing space for a church to eventually succeed the church hall. He began to enjoy to benefits of living close to his church hall but moreover was able to accommodate a curate. In 1953 Fr. Joseph Lavery was appointed as the first parish curate and was to serve for 10 years, greatly assisting Fr. Kenny, who had administered single handed, a widespread parish, including Sherburn Hill, Sherburn Village, Littletown and Shadforth as well as Sherburn House Hospital and Gilesgate Fever Hospital. In all 1300 parishioners.

Sadly, Fr. Kenny's health was not strong enough to cope with the anxieties of building a new school and church. In 1961 the Bishop transferred him to an established parish, St. Joseph's at Benwell, where he died on the feast of the Assumption in 1964.

His successor was Fr Henry Olsen of Ushaw College who continued to enjoy Fr. Lavery's support which allowed him to represent the Bishop on all matters educational, which responsibility occupied him considerably away from the parish. Nevertheless, he inherited the building of St. Joseph's infant and junior school on the site incorporating the church hall. The Hall was in use for quite some time before the school was added in 1962. There were many children in the school in the early 1960's with an annual intake of about 60 children. A temporary hut was erected in the school grounds and the altar platform was also used as a classroom. In 1972 St. Thomas More School was built at Belmont to relieve the congestion.

It also fell to Fr. Olsen to initiate the building of the new church and St Joseph's Church was eventually built, being completed in 1966: a lovely modern building, giving the maximum of light. It was built to seat 500. The architect was David Brown of Newcastle and the contractor was George Stephenson. The tender, exclusive of fees and expenses was £51,660. The church was connected to the existing presbytery by a sacristy block.

The church was opened in by Bishop James Cunningham on 4th April 1966.

An interesting feature of the opening ceremony was that the Mass was one of the first to be con-celebrated by eight priests, following the changes authorised by the recent 2nd Vatican Council. One Hundred Priests from the diocese attended along with the Mayor and Mayoress of Durham, Councillors and other local clergy.

Over the years many changes have taken place. To begin with, a wooden hut was erected in the car park and was used for many functions, including tea and biscuits after Sunday Mass.

Later plans were realised for the reordering of the church and provision of more social space, so we now have the Jubilee Room and Don Bosco rooms. By this time the old hut had become rat infested and was demolished. The car park was later extended and the grounds landscaped. These are now maintained with the help of an enthusiastic parish gardening team.

Fr. Olsen was elected to the Chapter of Canons in 1973 and transferred to St. Joseph's, Birtley, when the Benedictines vacated that Parish. He was then much nearer to the Bishop's House and his special duties.

On the 7th January 1978 Fr. Olsen was succeeded by Fr. John Condon, previously curate at Ryhope. Despite the parish population now being over 2,000 Fr. Condon lost his entitlement to a curate when Fr. Brendan Kelly was moved to Longbenton. However in 1985 Fr. Michael McGovern SDB was appointed to assist, although at that time, he resided at St. Cuthbert's presbytery.

Tragically, Fr. Condon died suddenly in hospital on 11th June 1991, aged only 57 years and was buried in his native Ireland. To Fr. Condon is attributed much credit for the close affiliation our parish enjoys with its fellow Christian churches and his

memory is firmly established in all who knew him. Truly a parish priest who was a man of the people.

In August 1991, Fr. Adrian McLeish was appointed to succeed Fr. Condon.

In February 1996 Fr. McLeish was replaced by Fr Michael Corbett. Fr Corbett was a much loved priest and worked hard to carry on the work begun by Fr. Condon and his predecessors.

Fr. Corbett was transferred to St Andrew's in Newcastle in April 2005 and Fr. Colm Hayden, who had served there, joined our Parish.

We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2016

Although stark and modern by contrast with our sister church of St Godric's and the other historic churches in our partnership, there are a number of notable features.

The large window above the main church entrance was sponsored by Durham Light Infantry and includes their emblems.

The smaller windows around the church are dedicated by parishioners in memory of deceased members of their families / parish groups.

The Risen Christ statue above the Altar was carved by the late Michael Doyle, a retired miner from Houghton-le-Spring who was a pitmen's leader for over 30 years and was Chairman of the Lambton Lodge for many years. He had a long political career and served on the old Durham County Council from 1938 until 1974.

Amongst his other works, Michael carved the crib figures for Durham Cathedral when he was in his 70's. Having discovered he had a natural gift for wood-carving, he was inspired to attempt such figures after a visit to Rome where as a Roman Catholic, he was particularly impressed by many of the statues he saw there.

St. Joseph's is surrounded by beautiful gardens, maintained with the help of our dedicated gardening group, Many of the roses and shrubs provide a memorial to deceased parishioners and priests including Fr. Condon, Fr. McGovern and Fr. Corbett.

St. Bede's



The church of St Bede was opened on 8th July 1970 to serve the growing population of Framwellgate Moor, Pity Me and Newton Hall. Due to the discovery of major structural faults, the building had to be closed in 2011 and was demolished.

The presbytery remains and provides office accommodation for CAFOD, meeting facilities and storage.

Following the generous offer by the Head of St. Godric's RC Primary School, Catherine Craig, the community remains strong and weekday services (Word and Communion or Holy Mass) usually take place at 9.15am, in St. Bede's Chapel which is adjoined to and has become an integral part of the school. One class always joins the Wednesday weekday Mass. Occasionally, parishioners join the whole school community for Holy Mass at the altered time of 9.30am.



St. Bede's Chapel at St. Godric's School

The Stations of the Cross from the church have recently been donated to The Sacred Heart Centre Chapel in Tanzania, as a result of our Parish response to an appeal from the Diocesan Resource Centre.



St. Bede's Stations of the Cross arrive in their new home

Please Note –

This summary of our Parish has been composed from various sources and anecdotal information. If you are aware of any errors or can add any information please contact peter.thompson248@gmail.com , or pass on your information to the Parish Secretary.

Cover image – Easter 2019 at St. Leonard's School