



History of St. Nicholas' Church

The story of St. Nicholas' begins in 1938 when a young Priest, Fr. Holdright, arrived at Gipton to establish a new Parish. Shortly before Fr. Holdright arrived in Gipton, 12 men canvassed the estate to count the number of Catholics in the newly established district. They discovered more than 2,000 families.

Fr. Holdright, with the support of the 12 men, organised the first fund-raising effort - a raffle - the forerunner of a flood of fundraising events designed to build the Parish as we know it today.

Fr. Holdright purchased the present site of 10 acres from Leeds Corporation at the heavy cost of £6, 766. 11s. 7d, and soon work was started on a church hall. Until the hall was completed Mass was offered at a hostelry, Wykebeck School and in private houses.

The hall was invaluable. Dances, whist drives, parties, meetings and jumble sales were staged to raise the money necessary for ambitious building projects aimed at providing the people of St. Nicholas' with a church and school.

The Second World War curtailed a scheme for a new church and school. Permission to go ahead with the erection of the buildings was applied for and refused on several occasions. Fr. Holdright returned time and time again from his interviews with planning committees, Ministry officials and licensing bodies to report to his loving flock that his application had been rejected.

After many years of devoted work Fr. Holdright was transferred to St. Stephen's, Skipton. He was succeeded as Parish Priest by Father Herbert Backhouse who relentlessly pursued the same course with officials. Father Backhouse believed that a parish would prosper on strong sodalities and he aimed with huge success at banding the men and women together to work and pray. He also infused the same spirit to strive and worship that had characterized the work of his predecessor.

The fruits of his and Father Holdright's labours were realised when the third Parish Priest, Father O'Driscoll, after several more years of striving, was finally given the "go-ahead."

The £74,000 Church was opened on July 26, 1961 by Dr. George Patrick Dwyer, Bishop of Leeds. It seats 550 and the opening was marked by the celebration of Pontifical High Mass. Fabrics cost £58,000 and the furnishings £16,000. There is a 70 foot high campanile over the baptistry. On top is an illuminated cross which can be seen quite clearly from the surrounding hillsides, proudly proclaiming to the world that the Parish has a church.



A congregation of more than 600 people attended the opening ... the hopes and dreams of the people of St. Nicholas' had materialised.