

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PARISH

The history of the parish began as World War II drew to an end. Bishop Pearson was at that time the Parish Priest of St Cuthbert's. He acquired a piece of land in the vicinity of Plumpton Avenue which was earmarked for the building of a new church. However, because of an exchange arrangement with some local builders, the church was eventually built on its present site, some hundreds of yards further east than originally intended. Thus was formed in embryo what was to become the Parish Church of Our Lady of the Assumption on Common Edge Road.

At this time, (1946-7) building restrictions applied, so what were the chances of building a new church when so many people required housing in war ravaged Britain? A chance acquaintance came to the rescue. Mr Thomas Foulkes (father of Fr Anthony Foulkes) travelled by train to work in Manchester. One of his fellow passengers was a Manchester architect Mr Charles Jackson. On hearing of the 'Church Scheme' he drew up plans and specifications free of charge and under the then 'Voluntary Labour Scheme' gathered together a group of 25 workers of differing trades and professions who, in the evenings, following their normal day's work, built a church under the direction of Fr J. J. Bamber.

In less than a year, the work was complete. The men had toiled through a long hot summer and thus at the Opening Ceremony on 17th August 1947, a gathering of some 1500 people heard the Bishop of Lancaster, Right Rev. T.E. Flynn praise the 'zeal and devotion of Blackpool Catholics and the generous and large-minded co-operation of friends.' Blackpool had a new Catholic Church.

Its certification as a 'place of meeting for Religious Worship' was 25th July, 1947. The Stations of the Cross were erected on 8th February, 1948 by Fr Richard Kivergan (OFM). The Crucifix was erected on 11th February, 1951. Soon, afterwards, a new school, of Our Lady of the Assumption was opened in 1953.

As the number of regular attendants increased, the need for a bigger place of worship became clear. In 1961, a permanent 300 seater church of Our Lady of the Assumption was opened, on the same site, at a cost of £34,000. Fr F. Warden, who at the time was the Parish Priest of Our Lady Star of the Sea, St Annes noted that: **"The architect, Mr Bower Norris of Stafford and all the craftsmen who had worked upon it had the admiration of the people of Blackpool."** The new church was blessed by Right Rev. T.B. Pearson (Bishop of Sinda) who also sang the Mass, while the Bishop of Lancaster, Right Rev. T.E. Flynn presided at the Opening.

The stained glass windows of the new church were properly aligned so that they would create magnificent lighting effects and atmosphere.

The pulpit and pews of the old church were donated to St Monica's in Mereside.

The Community of Our Lady of the Assumption is worthy of mentioning. In addition to the spiritual life of the people, many social events take place in the parish hall (which was the old church and is now also a community centre).