



# Holy Cross Parish History



## CATHOLICISM IN 19TH CENTURY GLASGOW

In the latter part of the 18th century there were few Catholics in Glasgow. Towards the end of the century it began to change when catholic highlanders, displaced by the clearances, came to the city. Their numbers were added to by immigrants from Ireland.

In 1814 Father (later Bishop) Andrew Scott organised the building of St Andrew's Cathedral and it was completed in 1816. About 1820 a mission was started in the 'Shaws' and in 1826 a chapel-of-ease, served from St Andrew's, was opened in the Gorbals in a building formerly used as an industrial school. This was a major step forward in the development of the church south of the river and it led to the foundation of the parish of St. John the Evangelist in 1846.

In 1882 a chapel of ease was started in Daisy Street and was served from St John's. A dual purpose building, for school and chapel was erected.



First Chapel School



Rev. Fr. V Chisholm, the Administrator of St John's, lived long enough to see the beginning of a mission in Crosshill.

He saw the school open with an enrolment of more than 100 and Mass at 11am in the chapel on Sundays.

By 1886 the congregation of Crosshill had increased sufficiently for Holy Cross to become an independent mission and Fr. Peter Link, an assistant priest at Our Lady and St Margaret's in Kinning Park, was appointed priest-in-charge on 7th May 1886.

The estimated population of the new mission was 770.

The parish had no presbytery and Father Link rented a flat in 36 Garturk Street where the rent for a half- year was £13. He had to work out the boundaries of the mission in consultation with St Mary's, St John's and St Francis'.

During his short ministry he built a secure foundation and he left a thriving and healthy community for his successor.



Fr. Peter Link

The congregation of the parish numbered around 1000 and the school population 210.

In 1889 Rev. William P O'Brien was appointed Parish Priest and a new era began. With the help of a growing and enthusiastic congregation, he pushed ahead for expansion. There was a heavy feu-duty of £120 per annum and a debt of over £3000. By 1892 the debt had been reduced to £2000 and the subsidies which Holy Cross had been receiving from St John's and the Diocesan Fund ceased.

Two years later Devon Villa, a large mansion house at 104 Albert Road, was purchased for £1850 to be used as a presbytery. Costly repairs had to be carried out but the income of the parish had increased such that only £2000 was added to the debt. With proper accommodation in 1895 it was possible to appoint a second priest and newly ordained Father Joseph Laveth was appointed.

As the population of the school was increasing a building fund was started and in 1898 it was decided to build a second Chapel-school on a site beside the first. There was a second floor that could be used as a temporary chapel.

In 1900 the new school was opened, the congregation was 2263 and the school roll was around 270.



## EARLY YEARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1904 the pastoral strength of the parish was increased with the appointment of Father William Manigan, on loan from Ireland, and the Masses on Sundays were 8am, 9.15am and 11am with an Evening Service at 7pm.

It was evident that the entire Chapel-school was needed for educational purpose alone. So on 5th January 1905 a committee was formed to raise funds for a major building project. The plan consisted of a Grand Bazaar in the City Hall for three days, 5th-7th October 1905. A series of events also took place throughout the year and there was great enthusiasm from the entire parish. The sum of £1400, an enormous sum for those days, had been raised by various means before the opening ceremony of the Grand Bazaar. The Parish's Annual Return for that year showed a total of £1762 one shilling and tuppence was available to reduce the debt on the school.

With one debt cleared, Father O'Brien went ahead with plans for further development. On 19th March 1907 he submitted sketches to the Archdiocesan Board of two sites for a new church, both in Dixon Avenue, one at the corner of Daisy Street, the other at Belleisle Street. Both feus were owned by the Dixon family. Eventually a feu contract was agreed for the second site, between the feudal superior, Dixon, and the Trustees of the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

This gave the trustees entitlement on the land and bound them to build a church on it. There was a lot of opposition from the residents of the neighbourhood who thought there would be a decline in amenities and the value of their property. The Glasgow Dean of Guild Court refused permission to build but the trustees appealed to the Court of Session and the judgment was given in favour of the church on 14th July 1909. Designs were not to exceed £8000 for the church nor £2000 for the presbytery. Under the direction of Pugin and Pugin the work began and was completed before the end of 1911.

On Sunday 26th November 1911 the Solemn Opening of the new church took place. Long before 11.30am, when High Mass was due to be sung, every seat was occupied. To control numbers and preserve the standard of dignity required, tickets were issued at the cost of ten and five shillings each - a substantial sum then. It made a useful contribution to the reduction of the debt.

Parishioners numbered around 3,700 and there were four Masses on Sunday. An Altar Society, the Children of Mary, Living Rosary, S.V.D.P. (St Vincent de Paul Society), the League of the Cross, Sacred Heart and Holy Family sodalities for men and women were all thriving. Boys and Girls' Guild were started in 1917 by Father Alex Hamilton who was attached to the parish when the assistant priests at the time were recalled to Ireland.

The St Vincent de Paul Society was very busy in its charity work especially after the war. A major project of theirs was a residential home at Langbank. to provide relief for children of the city.

Canon O'Brien retired in 1930 after 40 years in the parish.



*Class of Holy Cross School, early 1920's.*

## THE THIRTIES AND FORTIES

Bishop Henry Grey Graham succeeded Father O'Brien. He was Parish Priest for twenty-nine years and saw the period of economic depression in the early 1930's, the foundation of Holyrood School, the growth of the new suburb of King's Park and the opening of the parish of Christ the King. The development of the parish and the advances of catholic education in Glasgow meant that pupils from Holy Cross School who went on to Higher Education trained as teachers, doctors and some were ordained priest at home and abroad.

With the parish growing all the time, a 'meeting-place' was needed. Bishop Graham announced a Grand Sale of Work to be held in the Dixon Halls for the funds to adapt Devon Villa, the previous Presbytery, into a Hall. It was a great success. With the proceeds the restoration was completed by 1932. The accommodation was still not enough for major gatherings so Dixon Halls were used as a social centre.

It was decided to embellish the church in time for the Golden Jubilee of the mission which was due in 1936. Bishop Grey Graham launched an appeal. He appeared in full Episcopal regalia at every Mass on one Sunday to invite each family to contribute £2 to be spread over two years. He also sought additional anonymous donations from the wealthier sector of the community to provide important expensive items such as the marble pulpit, altar rails, bronze gates, stained glass windows and improved lighting etc. All of his requests had been promised before the 12 o'clock Mass had begun.

The congregation now numbered around 6,000. There were five Masses on Sunday as well as three on weekdays. When Christ the King opened its doors with about 1000 parishioners, 700 of whom were from Holy Cross, the pressure was relieved slightly.

During the Thirties the flow of young people from the parish continued to the priesthood and the religious life. With the coming of the Second World War many others were conscripted into the armed forces.

## *THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES*

Changes in the social environment had repercussions for the parish. The redevelopment of the areas around St John's and St Fancis' resulted in increased pressure on Holy Cross church and school. There were more than 1400 pupils housed in three buildings at Daisy Street and Crompton Avenue. A new housing area opened in Toryglen and then in 1957 a new parish of St Brigid opened bringing some temporary relief to the hard-pressed clergy at Dixon Avenue.

When the Centenary History was written it was noted that a remarkable feature of Holy Cross has been its stability to which a special contribution had been made by the people, both clerical and lay, who spent very long periods of their lives in the service of the parish community.

Bishop Henry Grey Graham died in December 1959

The new Parish Priest, Father Wycherley, implemented Bishop Graham's plans for the beautification of the church. The Golden Jubilee of the building was due in 1961. He installed the marble floor in the sanctuary, incorporating in it two magnificent decorative inserts - one on the left, showing the Bishop's coat-of-arms, consisting of a field of ermine with a row of pilgrims' scallops and two St Andrew's Crosses, celebrating his time at St Andrews and

Edinburgh; the other, on the right, a symbolic representation of the idea of the Holy Cross using the ancient symbols of the anchor and the fish.



The embellishment of the sanctuary was completed with the installation in the apse at the back of the altar of a mosaic depicting Christ Triumphant with the Cross. The two letters which appear beside the figure of Our Lord are the monogram of the Emperor Constantine, used by him on his battle pennants. They are the first two letters of the Greek form of Christos meaning Christ, the Anointed One. This mosaic was made in Venice.



Devon Villa, which had been converted from a presbytery to the church hall, was in poor condition and was demolished to make way for a new hall on the same site. It was ready in 1964. The formal opening of the new hall was one of the first public events graced by Archbishop Scanlan after his transfer from Motherwell to Glasgow.

The population was now over 8,000 and still increasing; it topped 10,000 by 1964. This was due to the redevelopment of congested areas of the city. Demolition was creating vast spaces in the once familiar streets around St Francis' and St John's churches and the population was overspilling towards Holy Cross.

Bishop James Ward became Parish Priest in 1965 and he decided that the situation for him and his 4 assistant priests, struggling to cope with a congregation of around 10,000 people, required radical changes. He set about making arrangements to open 3 new parishes in the area: St. Albert the Great (Pollokshields) in 1965 and St. Helen's (Langside) and Our Lady of Consolation (Govanhill) in 1966.

## *THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES*

While the number of parishioners had dropped to about 5,500, due to the new parishes, the parish roll did not stabilize and it again rose to over 6000 in 1973.

Monsignor John Gillespie had become Parish Priest on the death of Bishop Ward in 1972. It was during his term as Parish Priest that a parish council was instituted. Monsignor Gillespie was also responsible for adapting the sanctuary and confessionals as part of the implementation of the Second Vatican Council

## *MORE RECENT TIMES*

Father John Hanrahan was appointed Parish Priest in 1984 and he led the parish to participate fully in the Programme of Renewal introduced in the Archdiocese by Archbishop Winning after the visit of Pope John Paul II to Scotland in 1982.

Father Hanrahan was succeeded in 1995 by Father Tony Bancewicz and during his ministry, thanks to a Lottery Grant and the great generosity of the people of the parish, the roof of the church was renewed and the interior was renovated. Research in the parish archives meant that the ceiling of the church could be painted the same shade of blue as was used when the church was opened in 1911.

## OUR LADY OF CONSOLATION

Although the opening of St Albert's had made for a small reduction in the population of Holy Cross, something more was required. In 1966 the Majestic Cinema in Inglefield Street was obtained for the sum of £8000 and presented as a gift from Holy Cross to be a temporary Mass Centre for the new Parish of Our Lady of Consolation. Father Frederick Rawlings was appointed Parish Priest, "The first sight of the temporary Mass Centre was enough to daunt the stoutest of hearts.....The roof was repaired, the rubble cleared, plumbing set aright, the electric system re-wired, heating installed and the bare brick walls paneled and painted. As if by magic, a spacious sanctuary appeared with beautiful drape curtains of Our Lady's colours. Chairs and benches were brought and procured, confessionals built, a sacristy and baptistry installed..... we had a church ... erected by the valiant work of the people themselves".

The boundaries of this New Parish enclosed a relatively small but densely populated area which had been part of Holy Cross. Our Lady of Consolation can truly be described as a daughter parish.

In the beginning, four Masses were celebrated each Sunday at 9am, 10am, 11am and 12 noon but within a few weeks an evening Mass was added at 5pm .....a sure indication that a new parish was necessary in Govanhill.

The first Mass was celebrated by Bishop Ward on 25th September 1966 and on 4th December the statue of Our Lady of Consolation was unveiled. This was a gift from the Sisters of Stanbrook Abbey who are also under the protection of Our Lady of Consolation.



The plans for a permanent church were ready for implementation by 1969. A new temporary abode was required while the old Mass centre was demolished and the new church erected on the site.

"A lease was obtained of the Calder Cinema. Once again the people rallied. The men became painters, joiners, plumbers, electricians, heating engineers, scaffolders..... The women scrubbed, swept and shampooed at all hours of the day. It was a Herculean task, for the building had lain empty for years.

Holy Mass was offered in the new centre at midnight on Christmas Eve.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid on Thursday 12 November 1970. The rain came pouring in as the roof was not completed and the interior of the church was semi-flooded. It was cold and there was no glass in the windows. Nevertheless the ceremony went on with great dignity and joy. Some months later Bishop Ward administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in the same building and on 15 September 1971 Archbishop Scanlon ordained Neil Gallagher OFM to the ministerial priesthood: a most auspicious start for the new church of Our Lady of Consolation.

Father John O'Brien was Parish Priest from 1978 until his untimely death in 1999 and he was succeeded by Father Joe Walsh. During his term of office the chapel house at 106 Dixon Avenue was leased to the Sisters of the Gospel of Life and he moved across the road to live in Holy Cross Chapel House at 113. At about the same time the Cardinal Winning Pro-life Initiative took out a lease on Holy Cross Hall in Albert Road.

*(Adapted from ' The Parish of Holy Cross-Glasgow 1886~1986.' Centenary History  
by Tom Fitzpatrick, M.A., Ph.D. 7th May 1986)*

## LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING.....

On the appointment of Fr. Walsh to St. Lucy's in Cumbernauld in December 2003, Father Bancewicz was given the added responsibility of becoming Parish Priest of Our Lady of Consolation Parish and Archbishop Conti designated the Our Lady of Consolation building as an archdiocesan youth centre with Father Neil McGarrity appointed as Archdiocesan Youth Chaplain.

In June 2004, after consultation with the Priests' Council, the Archbishop made the decision to merge the Parish of Our Lady of Consolation with the Parish of Holy Cross. Father Neil Donnachie became the first Parish Priest of the 'new' parish.