

OTHER CHURCHES

There are eight Catholic churches dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima in the UK. Staplefield in Sussex dedicated in 1966, Harlow in Essex built in 1960, Bala in Gwynedd, Wales built in 1958, White City in London and Quinton in Birmingham both built in 1955, Lochwinnoch in Strathclyde, Scotland built in 1954, Barnton in Cheshire built in 1953 and our very own Brixey road built in 1950 making our church possibly the first in the country to be dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima.

CANON MICHAEL COUGHLAN

Our church's history started with the vision of Canon Michael Joseph Coughlan, the Parish Priest at St. Josephs from 1930 to 1956. Canon Coughlan was reputed to have been a very strong character, born in Mitchelstown, County Cork in 1897. He was ordained as Priest in 1921. His first appointment in the Diocese was to the Hoe district of Plymouth where he stayed for six years. In 1927 he came to the Carmelite Convent at Branksome and whilst there he founded the parish of Ensbury Park. In 1930 he became the Parish Priest of St Joseph's where he very quickly set himself as a formidable leader of the parish. For some years he lobbied the diocese, local council and local businesses to gain enough support to build a school. He was of course successful and in 1937 St Joseph's Catholic School was opened. Finally Canon Coughlan built this lovely little church of Our Lady of Fatima.



THE NEED FOR A NEW CHURCH

Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church was originally conceived as being a Chapel of Ease to serve the newly built post war housing estates of Bourne Valley and Trinidad as the old St Joseph's church was much too small to accommodate a growing population. Canon Coughlan purchased the plot of land in Brixey Road in 1949 and the 'breaking of the ground' ceremony was held shortly after where Canon Coughlan cut the first piece of turf for construction to begin.

The church was designed by local architects P. A. Byrne and W. G. Seaton of 44 Parkstone Road. This was their second church to design having already designed St Catherine's in Wimborne in 1933. It was designed to be a dual purpose church and hall with a capacity of 350 people including the choir although on feast days it was known to hold up to 450 with parishioners standing everywhere they could find a spot including on the staircase leading to the choir. The building of the church was carried out by a reputable local firm called Burt and Vickers.

The foundation stone was laid in place on 22nd July 1949 by His Lordship Francis Joseph Grimshaw, the 6th Bishop of Plymouth. The Latin inscription on the stone translates as 'TO THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD, FRANCIS BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH, ON THE DAY OF 22ND JULY 1949, HAS SET THIS STONE, L.D.S. PRAISE TO GOD ALWAYS.

BISHOP GRIMSHAW



Francis Joseph Grimshaw was Bishop from 1947 to 1954. He was born in Bridgewater in Somerset in 1901 and ordained in 1926. He was installed as Bishop of Plymouth on 25th July 1947 at Plymouth Cathedral, the principal consecrator was Joseph Masterson, Archbishop of Birmingham; and the principal co-consecrators were William Lee the Bishop of Clifton, and Edward Ellis, Bishop of Nottingham. In 1954 Bishop Grimshaw was translated to become the Archbishop of Birmingham where he stayed until his death on the 22nd March 1965. He passed away at Edgbaston in Birmingham and is buried at St. Marys College, Oscott in Sutton Coldfield.

THE CHURCH

The church was designed with a roller shutter that could be pulled down to close off the Sanctuary during social and all non liturgical events. The original position of the tabernacle was recessed into the wall above the altar. The altar also was placed in a different position than it currently is up against the wall in the tradition of the pre Second Vatican Council mass where the priest would have his back to the congregation.

THE OPENING

The church was officially blessed and opened for its first holy mass on the 16th April 1950. The ceremony was scheduled to begin at 10.45am but large crowds started to develop long before. The ceremony began with a procession of clergy towards the church walking along Brixey Road, coming from the house of Mrs. Cake who lived in Brixey Road and offered her house to be used by the Bishop and attending clergy along with altar servers to dress into their robes as there was no Presbytery on site. The clergy listed as attending in the local paper at the time were Canon Michael Coughlan, Fr M. O'Neil, Fr D. Kavanagh, Fr Joseph Lombardi, Fr H. McEvoy SJ, Fr Felim Moore (Sub-Deacon) and Fr Victor Robertson. The day itself went extremely well and is remembered fondly by all who attended. It was reported in the local paper at the time as follows: 'The Bishop accompanied by clergy and altar boys bearing cross, candles, book etc. processed counter-clockwise around the church. Worshippers knelt while the Bishop sprinkled the walls with water and blessed the exterior of the church. Returning to the main doors he then performed the opening ceremony while the girl's choir sang Kyrie eleison. High Mass at which the Bishop presided was celebrated by the Very Rev. Canon Coughlan and assistant clergy. The Bishop's sermon began by saying "This is a very happy day – the construction of this church is an act of faith set in stone, bricks and mortar"'. At the time the church did not have its own statue of Our Lady and so had to borrow one from St Joseph's for the occasion.



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THE EARLY YEARS

As the church was only blessed in 1950 and not consecrated it was possible to use the church for other events and purposes. There were shutters to cover the Sanctuary and Side chapel to close it off. There were no pews at the time only chairs that had to be stacked away on Sunday evening ready for the weeks use and set out again on Friday nights ready for mass, this was all done regular as clockwork by members of the parish. Mass would be celebrated by Fr Felim Moore who was Curate at St Josephs at the time, he would arrive each Sunday riding a little motorbike. Canon Coughlan though had very little to do with Our Lady of Fatima after it was built. The first children to celebrate their First Holy Communion here did so on 17th June 1951. In 1952 and throughout the 1950's the church was used each weekday as an overflow class room for the lower forms of St Josephs school until the school was extended in 1960.



BISHOP RESTIEAUX

Bishop Grimshaw was succeeded by His Lordship Cyril Edward Restieaux as the 7th Bishop of Plymouth. Bishop Restieaux was born in Norwich on 25th February 1910 and was ordained as priest on 1st November 1932. He was consecrated as Bishop on 14th June 1955 by Archbishop Grimshaw with John Murphy, Archbishop of Cardiff; and Joseph Rudderham, Bishop of Clifton as co-consecrators. He retired in 1985 after thirty years as Bishop of Plymouth, and went to live at Stoodley Knowle Convent in Torquay. 1996 was the year in which Bishop Restieaux passed away on the 27th February, two days after his 86th birthday. He is buried at the Cathedral in Plymouth.

Fr MICHAEL WALSH

In 1956 Canon Coughlan left St Joseph's to a smaller parish in Dawlish in Devon and was replaced by Fr Joseph Lombardi. At this time the decision was made to change Our Lady of Fatima from a chapel of ease on the western end on the Parkstone parish into an independent parish of its own. Our first parish priest was Fr Michael Walsh. Fr Walsh (later Canon Walsh) was born in 1913 in Glenroe in East Limerick; he studied at the seminary in Carlow and was ordained as priest on Trinity Sunday 1938.

Fr Walsh came to us from Helston in Cornwall where he had previously built a church and immediately set about building the presbytery here. Following this he tried to purchase some land behind the church in what is now Brixey Close with the intention of building a church hall. Unfortunately he met staunch resistance from the owners of the land, the Churchill family who refused out right to sell to Catholics, a very common discrimination at the time. Fr Walsh was a great fundraiser and wanted to try and reduce the parish debt from the building of the church which was at the time a very substantial amount of around £8,000.

He set about doing this by changing the weekly whist drives at the church to the much more profitable bingo. This took place every Friday evening and was very well attended. The top prize in those days was £1 10 shillings and the maximum jackpot of £10.

Fr Walsh was also very diligent in collecting from the congregation, as well as giving at Sunday mass; parishioners could quite often expect to see Fr Walsh popping in afterwards or during the week for a little extra for the collection.

Canon Michael Walsh sadly passed away in 2005. He had retired to Wyke in Portland and spent much time travelling around the diocese to help out in different parishes whenever he was needed. He became known as 'The Grand Old Man' of Plymouth Diocese. Canon Walsh had a very short illness before he died and was able to spend time with many of his priest friends; one in particular was Fr William Kiely who was a curate to Canon Walsh for a time.



THE STATUE OF OUR LADY

1956 was also the year in which we received our wonderful statue of Our Lady of Fatima. She was brought here from Fatima by Fr Victor Robertson who would drive each year to either Fatima or Lourdes in an old Austen 10; you can only wonder how uncomfortable those trips must have been travelling to rural Europe in a car without air conditioning on dirt track roads. After purchasing the statue Fr Robertson came to customs and drove to a guard that he had come to know from his previous trips. When asked by the guard if he had anything to declare, Fr Robertson said he had something very special and took him to the boot of the car to show him. On seeing the statue the guard closed the boot and stated that there was nothing at all in the car and Fr Robertson was free to proceed without paying the import duty which was due.

CANON COUGHLAN'S DEATH

1962 was the year of Canon Coughlan's passing. He died just a few months after his retirement due to ill health on the 3rd July in St Patricks Hospital, Fermoy, Co. Cork. He was blessed that he was able to celebrate the mass right up until he died having done so on the very morning of his death. Canon Coughlan truly was a remarkable man who shaped the Catholic life of our town for the better and Poole was truly blessed to have had him serve here.

Fr CORNELIUS TWOHIG

1962 saw the departure of Fr Walsh from the parish to his new posting at St Budeaux in Plymouth. Our next parish priest was Fr Cornelius Twohig known as 'Con'. Fr Twohig was a native of Cork in Ireland and was ordained priest in Carlow on 3rd June 1944. His first appointment to the Diocese was to Torquay, and subsequently to Dorchester, then the Cathedral where he served with Fr Patrick Dorrian, and finally to Lanherne in Cornwall before coming to us.

In 1963 Fr Twohig re-ordered the church by installing the curved ceiling that we have today, along with the baldacchino above the altar and changed the position of the altar and tabernacle to face the congregation in the new style adopted after the second Vatican council in 1962.

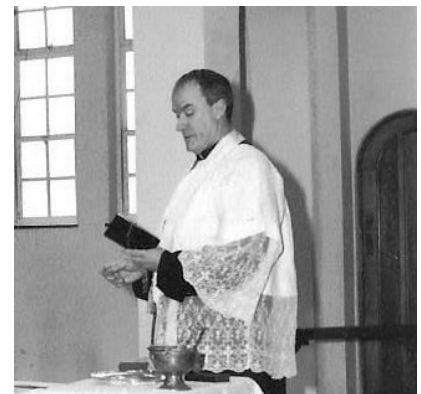
In 1964 he introduced the Offertory Promise Scheme for planned giving to the church. This was in an attempt to improve the finances of the parish. At the time he stated that 'some weeks he didn't know how he would make ends meet'. In answer to this problem Fr Twohig sent the men of the parish out into the community to visit every parishioner and ask them to join the scheme. Following this, the collections from the first weekends masses went up from £8 per week to £44 per week and the church was saved from financial ruin.

In 1967 Fr Twohig felt he received a fresh call from the Lord to missionary work in Africa. Pope Paul VI had appealed to priests in the western world to volunteer to minister to the church in developing countries; this was fully endorsed by Bishop Restieaux who duly sent out the call to the Diocese. Fr Twohig accepted this call being the first priest in our diocese to volunteer and left our parish to spend two years in the MISIKHU mission in Kenya with the Mill Hill Fathers. During his time in Kenya, Fr Twohig worked with various other priests but in particular one Fr Patrick Stewart with whom he helped to build a church and a school. Fr Twohig regarded this time as the happiest in his life.



Fr PATRICK DORRIAN

During this time our stand in Parish priest was Fr Patrick Dorrian. Fr Dorrian was born in Donegal and was ordained as priest on 22nd June 1952 and spent time in the parish of Falmouth and at the Cathedral before coming to us. Fr Dorrian was a very committed priest and prided himself on being able to be sent anywhere in the diocese at a moment's notice, he would only ever keep enough things that could be packed into a couple of suitcases so that he could be ready and on the road. In 1999 Fr Pat Dorrian passed away whilst he was Parish priest at St Bernadette's in Ensbury Park. He died suddenly while shopping at Sainsbury's at Alder Road.



Fr Twohig returned to us from Kenya in 1969 and stayed as parish priest until 1974 when he moved to St. Anthony's in Broadstone.

During this time in 1970 the Catholic Women's League established its Parkstone branch at OLF. Fr Twohig sadly passed away in 2004; he had been living at Nazareth House in County Cork shortly before his death.



Fr PATRICK MULVANY

1974 to 1975 saw the short tenure of Fr Patrick Mulvany as parish priest. Fr Mulvany (later Canon Mulvany) was born in 1939 in Kilberry, Co. Meath. He trained for the priesthood at St. Patrick's College in Carlow and was ordained as priest on the 9th June 1962 before coming to our diocese where he served as curate at St. Josephs for a time. His first appointment as parish priest was in Camborne, he then came to us at OLF before heading onto St. Augustine's in Weymouth. Canon Patrick Mulvany passed away in 2004; he was priest at Holy Trinity in Dorchester at the time. Canon Mulvany paid a great deal of attention to the retired Irish clergy in particular to Fr Twohig whom he held in high regard.

Fr CHRISTOPHER SMITH

In 1975 we received our next parish priest, Fr Christopher John Smith. Fr Smith (later Canon Smith) was born in Sutton in Surrey on 25th March 1936 and spent his childhood as an evacuee in Bideford in Devon.

He was ordained in Rome at the Basilica of St. John Lateran on the 12th March 1960 after training at the Venerable English College there. He served as curate in Crownhill, Plymouth, Penzance and Exmouth before receiving his first post as Parish Priest here at OLF.

Fr Smith was very well known for his DIY skills and wasn't at all afraid to grab a sledge hammer and knock down walls which indeed he did here being responsible for removing the wall in the old baptistery which is now the meeting room. He also rallied the congregation together to get them to help paint the inside of the church.

Fr Smith established a girls club and altar boys club at the church which were very successful. During this time in 1976 we received our Stations of the Cross reliefs which are now in the main body of the church. They were given to us by St Mary's from the old church in West Quay Road following its demolition. In 1978 Fr Smith led a parish pilgrimage to Lourdes with 53 parishioners. Fr Smith left our parish in 1979 to become the parish priest at Marnhull. Canon Smith passed away in 2007; he finished his ministry in Dartmouth parish and had been created a Canon in 2001. He had also become the diocesan archivist and the editor of the Diocesan year book taking a particular interest in the history of our Diocese as well as the Catholic Church in general, he did at one point also appear on the Antiques Road Show showing a medieval cope from his church.



Fr WILLIAM KIELY

Fr William Kiely became our next parish priest in 1979. Fr Bill as he liked to be called came to us from Canning Town in London where he spent two years at Anchor House, a seaman's mission for the Apostleship of the Sea, before this his parish was Bideford. He was born in Knockalara in Co. Waterford in Ireland and trained at St. John's College in Waterford. He was ordained on 14th June 1964 at Waterford Cathedral by the bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Daniel Cohalan.

Fr Kiely came from a very distinguished family of priests; his great uncle was Canon Walter Kiely who was the parish priest of Portland for many years and also his great-great uncle Fr William Casey who is remembered for building the parish church in Marnhull, the first Catholic Church to be built in the diocese since the reformation.

During Fr Bill's time as parish priest we received our first female server to the newly formed Arch Con Fraternity of St. Stephen. Also around this time Mr. Tom Sharp and Mr. Dave Morrell became the first two extraordinary ministers of communion in the parish.

In the 1980's Our Lady of Fatima would hold their Summer Fetes at Lindsay Manor which was the house owned by Lord Ventry between Lindsay Road and Poole Road. Lord Ventry was a local aristocrat and parishioner at St. Joseph's.

Arthur De Moleyns, the 7th Baron Ventry to give him his full title was an Irish landowner with estates in the Dingle area of Co. Kerry. He converted to Catholicism in 1941 in London after meeting three sisters coming out of mass that came from his estate in Ireland, and after speaking to them and witnessing their faith he decided to become a Catholic himself. Lord Ventry passed away in 1987 and was succeeded in his title by his nephew. His estate was sold off and is now the site of Tesco at Branksome. After the estate was sold the Summer Fetes were held at St Josephs School for a short time and then at St Josephs Church until Fr Stephen Geddes decided we should hold them at our own church.



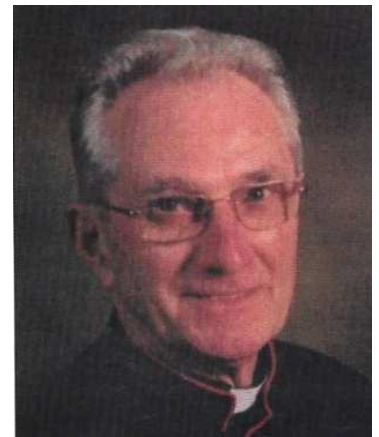
BISHOP BUDD

In 1985 we received our next Bishop, Hugh Christopher Budd. He was born in Romford in Essex on 27th May 1937 and was ordained priest on the 8th July 1962 in Rome. Bishop Christopher spent time as a Theology Lecturer and Rector of a seminary for six years. He then spent a short period of time in Brentwood Cathedral Parish before being offered the position of Bishop by the Papal Nuncio. He was installed as the 8th Bishop of Plymouth on the 15th January 1986 and was consecrated by Bishop Restieaux. 2014 saw the long awaited and well deserved retirement of Bishop Christopher who had to prolong his episcopacy due to Pope Benedict's retirement in 2013 and Pope Francis's election. Bishop Emeritus Christopher now lives in The Scilly Isles off the coast of Cornwall.

Fr MICHAEL HOWARD

Fr Kiely left our parish in 1988 and became the parish priest at Bideford in Devon. Our next priest would be Fr Michael Howard who came to us from the church of St. Cuthbert Mayne in Launceston in Cornwall. Fr Howard (later Canon Howard) was born 7th November 1925 in Liverpool. He spent a brief period of his life as a Franciscan Friar using the name Brother Sebastiano and was finally ordained to the priesthood on 15th April 1974. Fr Howard led a parish pilgrimage to Lourdes in September 1992. In 1994 the original altar rails were removed from the Sanctuary. In 1995 the Catholic Women's League celebrated their silver jubilee at OLF.

Fr Howard left OLF in 1995 to become the parish priest at St. Agatha's in Dawlish where he stayed until his retirement in 2007. Canon Michael Howard sadly passed away on the 14th April 2014 aged 88.



Fr TERENCE DOLAN

Our next priest was a local man Fr Terry Dolan who came to us from Looe in Cornwall. Fr Dolan was born on the 20th January 1939 at Ensbury Park. Fr Dolan worked for a time as an accountant before being called to the priesthood. He studied at St Mary's College, Oscott and was ordained on the 24th March 1966 at St. Bernadette's in Ensbury Park. Fr Dolan left us in 1998 to become the parish priest at St Edwards in Swanage where he remained until his retirement in 2008. His farewell mass took place on 23rd August 1998. Fr Terry stayed in Swanage until his retirement in 2008 following which he lived with his sister in Ensbury Park; he passed away on the 30th March 2015.

Fr STEPHEN GEDDES

In September 1998, Fr Stephen Geddes came to OLF and instantly became a beloved parish priest. Fr Stephen was born in Glasgow and became a Benedictine Monk (O.S.B.) at St. Benedict's Abbey. He was ordained on the 8th December 1988 at his monastery and became a chaplain in the Royal Navy. After leaving the Navy in 1998 he spent a very short time at St. Peter's, Crownhill in Plymouth. Bishop Christopher then offered him his first official post as parish priest at Our Lady of Fatima informing him that if he did not accept this post then OLF would not have a priest and would likely close. Thankfully Fr Stephen accepted and arrived at OLF in the September.

One of Fr Stephen's first acts as parish priest was to set up a Parish Council and Finance Committee which he did on the 29th September 1998.



He then went about setting up the RCIA team which would help to instruct candidates for the rite of election, three candidates were enrolled and received into the church the following Easter. He also re-established the Society of St. Vincent DePaul at Our Lady of Fatima, set up a choir and organized a successful senior citizens 'Wednesday Club'. In 1999 Fr Stephen led the parish on a pilgrimage to Fatima where the statue of Our Lady which sits in the front porch was purchased as were the altar cloths in the Sanctuary.

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

The millennium saw the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Our Lady of Fatima and many events were organized to celebrate the golden jubilee of our parish as well as some distinct changes to the church building. This was also the year that the statue of Our Lady in the Lady Chapel received her crown. The official celebration mass for the jubilee actually took place on the feast of Our Lady of Fatima on the 13th May, instead of the actual date of the anniversary which would have been 19th April. The procession into mass carried the new statue of Our Lady brought from Fatima the previous year. The mass was co-celebrated by several past parish priests from OLF as well as priests from neighbouring parishes including Fr Lear who was curate at Christ the King at the time, Fr Terry Dolan, Fr Bryan Legg, Fr Stephen Geddes, Canon Michael Walsh, Fr Dylan James, Canon Kenneth Noakes and Fr Peter Symons.

In October 2000 the wooden dividing screen was erected and the Jubilee room was created, the screen was designed by Colin Morrell and built by Burt and Vikes. Other alterations took place at this time also including the renovations to the kitchen and toilet facilities. This was done in an effort to create an area that could be used by the community for social and parish events.

With a dedicated church hall which was separate from the main body of the church we could now have the church formally consecrated. The consecration took place on 13th May 2001 and was celebrated by Bishop Christopher.

2001 was a big year for Fr Stephen as he received dispensation from his monastic vows from Pope John Paul II and was officially made a parish priest. This year also saw the conversion of the choir into the upper meeting room. Around this time Fr Stephen had a small accident in the church when he fell off of a ladder and broke his arm and wrist. He went to hospital to have it treated and was back to say mass that evening.

Further renovations to the church took place in 2002 with a new marble shelf and support pillars being installed in the Sanctuary for the tabernacle as well as new coloured glass windows in the Lady Chapel. We also had the gates and rails installed on the front of the church. In April of this year Fr Stephen led the parish on a pilgrimage to Walsingham. During this trip parishioners purchased the six tall candle sticks behind the altar to sit on the new marble shelf. In 2002 Fr Stephen left OLF to become the parish priest at Most Holy Trinity in Newquay. Fr Stephen did a great amount of good in our parish in a relatively short period of time and he is still remembered fondly.

Fr PETER BURROWS

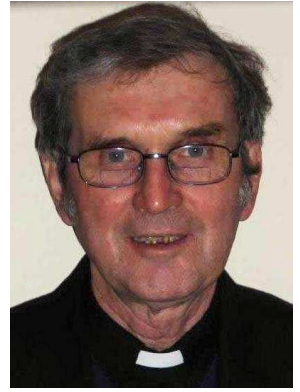


For the following year we had the short term incumbent in the Presbytery, Fr Peter Burrows who came to us from Ascot in Berkshire.

Fr Burrows was born in Los Angeles and was previously a Baptist Minister; he was married and has children. I believe he was widowed and decided to convert to Catholicism. He studied at Harvard in Massachusetts and received a PhD in Theology and Rabbinic Literature. He was ordained at St. Marys in Poole on 8th December 1993 by Bishop Christopher and Canon Peter Webb who was parish priest there at the time. Whilst at OLF Fr Burrows gave a series of talks and discussions on the subject of Lent to the parish which were very well received by parishioners. He left us in 2003 and retired to the Cathedral in Plymouth but finally ended up as a lecturer at Allen Hall Seminary in London. Since his retirement he now lives with the Society of African Missionaries, known as the White Fathers in London.

Fr CIARAN McGUINNESS

Following Fr Burrows' departure in 2003 we had another short term priest in Fr Ciaran McGuinness. Fr Ciaran was born in County Cavan in Ireland on the border with Northern Ireland. He was ordained there in 1972 and joined the order of Missionaries of Africa (M.Afr.). He spent the next twenty nine years working in Malawi and Sudan. In 2001 he returned from Africa and two years later took up his first position as a parish priest in the diocese at OLF. During his time in Sudan Fr Ciaran learnt Arabic and whilst at OLF he would write his personal notes in Arabic so that nobody else could read them. Fr Ciaran left us in 2004 and took up his next position at Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Cecilia in Blandford. He would have preferred to go back to Africa but due to his health at the time he was advised not to.



CANON PETER WEBB

Our next Parish priest was Canon Peter Webb, who came to us from St. Marys in August 2004. Fr Peter was born in Yelverton in Devon and studied for the priesthood at St Boniface's College in Plymouth and then at the English College in Valladolid, Spain. He was ordained by Bishop Restieaux at the church of Christ the King in Plymouth on 13th June 1964. During his time at St. Mary's in the 1990's, Fr Peter was elevated to be a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter in Plymouth. Fr Peter retired from active ministry in 2011 and moved to PLUSSULIEN in Brittany, France. He was our last Resident Parish Priest.

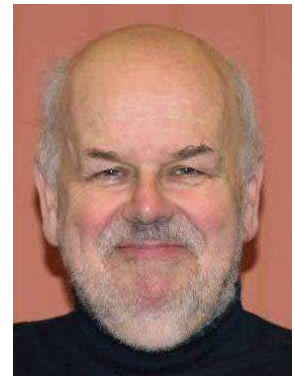
Fr BARRY HALLETT

After Fr Peter retired from OLF, uncertainty reigned over whether or not our church would remain open as there were not enough priests in the diocese for the Bishop to be able to send one to us. The solution came in the form of Fr Barry Hallett, the parish priest of St. Josephs who was asked to take on the responsibility of running our church as well as his own. Many changes occurred at this time, most significantly the number of masses; we lost the Saturday vigil mass and the 10 o'clock Sunday mass.

Fr Barry was born in Sherborne and trained for the priesthood in several places; firstly at St. Marys Oscott in Birmingham, then at the English College in Valladolid and finally at Campion House in London. He was ordained on a very hot Friday evening on the 22nd July 1982 in his home church of Sacred Heart and St Aldhelm. Fr Barry's first placement as Curate was to Sacred Heart in Exeter, then Holy Ghost parish in Exmouth, and finally to Christ the King in Plymouth.

After this in 1988 Fr Barry became the Chaplain to the University of Plymouth where he remained for fifteen years. He was finally given his first parish in 2003 which was St. Josephs.

During his time here at OLF Fr Barry caused several large maintenance jobs to be carried out. In 2012 new front doors were fitted; in December 2013 the Sanctuary and Lady Chapel were re decorated; and in 2014 with financial help from the Talbot Trust we renovated the kitchen and meeting room.



In 2012 we were fortunate enough to have the seminarian Colin Groombridge spend time with us in the parish during his year placement from St. John's Seminary in Womersley. Colin lived at St Josephs for the year but became a very familiar face at OLF and actually gave his first homily at Mass here. Fr Colin was ordained at Plymouth Cathedral along with Fr Jacek Kostuch by Bishop Christopher on 3rd July 2015. His first post as Curate was to St Marys in Poole with Canon John Webb.

In August 2013 we received our first resident at the Presbytery since Fr Peter had left; Fr Paul Keyes stayed with us at OLF whilst serving as a Curate. He was born in Windsor and spent many years working in the private sector before feeling the call to the priesthood. He trained at St. John's Seminary in Womersley and was ordained at Plymouth Cathedral on 22nd June 2013. Fr Paul left us in September 2014 to become parish priest at St. Josephs in Wool with the added parishes of St Edwards in Wareham and the chapel at Lulworth Castle. In September 2015 Fr Paul also added Swanage to his list of parishes.



Our next Curate in the parish was Fr Ralph Candy who arrived in September 2014 and lived at St Josephs. Fr Ralph is a local Dorset man who grew up on his family's dairy farm Northwood in Manston near Marnhull. He spent some time working as a Landscape Architect and Chartered Environmental Planner and also as a Professional Expert Witness for planning disputes. Fr Ralph studied at Reading University and worked in Munich, Germany for some time. He took his Masters Degree at Edinburgh University and ended his studies at Kings College, London. After completing his studies he then worked as a planning Consultant for fifteen years before being called to serve the church, his family would joke that he was a perpetual student due to the amount of time he had spent at university and then the Seminary.



His call to the Priesthood came at the passing of Pope John Paul II, whilst watching his funeral mass he had a conversion moment. He studied for the priesthood at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome where he was ordained to the diaconate by Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor.

His ordination to the priesthood took place on 25th July 2014 at Plymouth Cathedral and was the first to be celebrated by Bishop Mark. Fr Ralph left us in September 2015 for his first post as parish priest at Holy Spirit and St Edwards in Swanage; he stayed for one year before being sent to The Sacred Heart in Bideford, North Devon.

At the same time that Fr Ralph moved into the presbytery at St Joseph's, we received our next resident at the presbytery here. Sr. Marion stayed here until she retired from her pastoral work in the chaplaincy at Bournemouth University. She had very little to do with our parish in the time that she was here and left us in Spring 2016 when she returned to the mother house of her order, the French Order of the Cenacle which she joined in 1977.

BISHOP MARK O'TOOLE

Following the retirement of Bishop Christopher in 2014, Pope Francis appointed Monsignor Mark O'Toole on the 9th November 2013. Bishop Mark was born in London in 1963. He studied at Leicester University before attending Allen Hall Seminary in 1984 where he graduated with a bachelor of Divinity in Theology. Bishop Mark was ordained on 9th June 1990 by Cardinal Basil Hume. Following his Ordination he went on to study Theology at Oxford. Bishop Mark's first parish appointment was in 1992 as Assistant priest in St Mary Magdalene parish, Willesden Green. In 1997 he became a lecturer in Theology at Allen Hall. Bishop Mark was then appointed in 2002 as private secretary to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster until September 2008 when he was made Rector of Allen Hall Seminary. He was consecrated as the 9th Bishop of Plymouth on 28th January 2014 by Bishop Christopher.



Fr CHRISTOPHER FINDLAY-WILSON



Fr Barry left OLF and St Josephs in September 2015 to become the Parish Priest at Holy Trinity in Dorchester. Our Next Priest was Fr Christopher Findlay-Wilson who came to us from his previous parish of Camborne and Redruth all the way at the other end of the diocese in Cornwall.

Father Chris was born in Walton-on-Thames in Surrey before moving to Shaftesbury in North Dorset where his family attended the local Catholic Church. He is one of four children and grew up on a small holding. Fr Chris's family are doubly blessed having two priests in their family; his brother Dominic is a priest in Clifton Diocese.

After leaving St Andrews University, he worked for his father for a short time in their family business, a casting foundry in Dinton, Wiltshire before deciding to become a priest. He studied at St John's Seminary in Womersley before being ordained on the 12th July 1997 in his home parish church of The Most Holy Name and St Edward, King and Martyr by Bishop Christopher and his parish priest Fr Ernest Jeanneau. Fr Chris's first post as a Curate was actually here in Poole serving at St Mary's alongside Fr Peter Webb for three years. He then went on to Sacred Heart in Exeter for three and a half years before moving to Camborne.

After moving to St Joseph's and OLF Fr Chris quickly instituted Our Lady's Mass on Saturday mornings and re-instituted the original confession booth which had been used as a broom cupboard for many years. 2017 saw the renovation of the Presbytery in preparation for the arrival of a community of Ursuline Nuns from India on the invitation of Bishop Mark O'Toole; unfortunately in August 2017 the Nuns informed the parish that they would not be able to join us due to issues in the visa office. In July of this year we also received a visit from the Legion of Mary who did a thorough survey of the number of Catholics in the parish. It also saw the redecorating of the Lady Chapel in celebration of the centenary of the apparitions in Fatima. Pope Francis decreed in this year that an indulgence would be granted to anybody who prayed faithfully before a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Fund raising continues with events to celebrate the Fatima Centenary with a view of commissioning a stained glass window for the Lady Chapel and a statue of Our Lady of Fatima for the Presbytery garden.

