

The History of Christ the King and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Coventry



Introduction

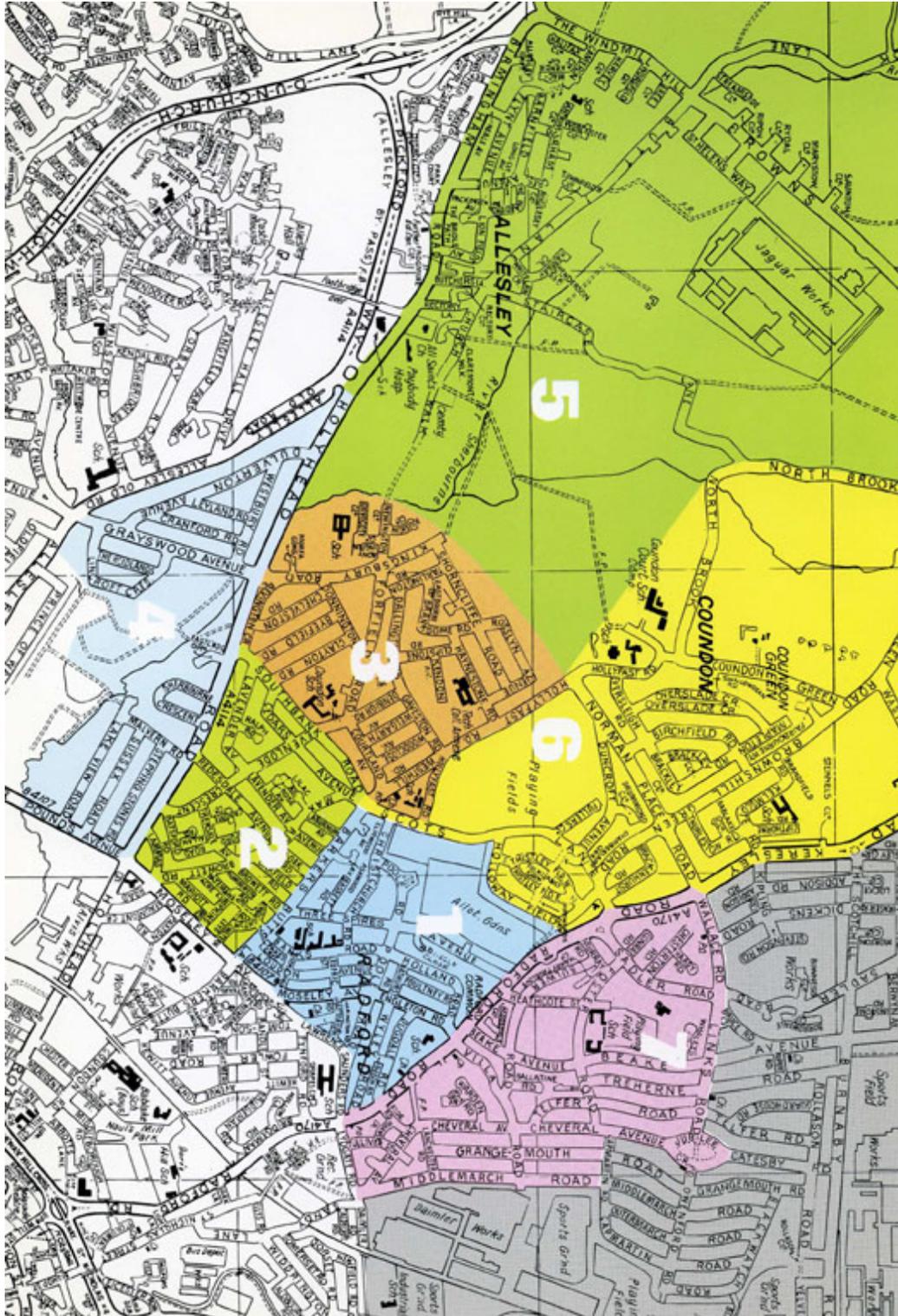
Much of the information below is taken from a booklet produced on the Golden Jubilee of the Parish (July 1982), whilst Monsignor Michael McTernan was Parish Priest. This was written by a parishioner, Freda Lambert.

Additional information came from the Parish report 1969-70, Parish Brochure March 1979, St Augustine's Sports centre publication May 1990.

In January 2006 Canon Thomas Farrell was appointed Parish Priest replacing Father Eamon Clarke who retired after 13 years being Parish Priest, aged 71, due to ill health.

One of the many changes was to create a parish website on the internet (www.ctlk-cov.org.uk).

This is intended to capture the parish history and be available for all to access. This will be updated as additional more information becomes available with time. If you have any information or photographs please email to con.mchugh@ntlworld.com



Christ the King and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Boundary with Areas

Clergy associated with the Parish

<i>Year</i>	<i>Parish Priest</i>	<i>Assistant Priests</i>	
1932	<i>William Mooney</i>		
1936		<i>Bernard McKenna</i>	
1941	<i>William Flint</i>	<i>Cyril Adams</i>	
1944	<i>William Gardiner</i>	<i>Peter Tuite</i>	
1947			<i>William Lyons</i>
1948		<i>Herbert L. Damp</i>	
1950	<i>Denis Toplass (acting PP) Douglas Carter</i>		
1952			<i>Laurence Hogarty</i>
1954		<i>John P. Lane</i>	
1956		<i>Bernard Jones</i>	
1957			<i>Peter Moore</i>
1958		<i>George Smith</i>	
1959	<i>Michael McTernan</i>	<i>Thomas Williams</i>	<i>Francis Gwinnett</i>
1966		<i>David Lloyd</i>	<i>Owen O'Connor</i>
1969		<i>Brendan McBride</i>	
1972			
1975		<i>Fergus O'Connell</i>	
1976		<i>Terence Smyth C.R.P</i>	
1977			<i>John Paul O'Sullivan (to 1988)</i>
1978			<i>David Keniry</i>
1993	<i>Eamonn Clarke</i>	<i>Bernard Kelly</i>	
1995		<i>Patrick Brennan (to 1997)</i>	
1997		<i>Michael Amahados (to 2000)</i>	
2000		<i>Richard Walker (to 2003)</i>	
2003		<i>John Bently (to 2005)</i>	
2006	<i>Thomas Farrell</i>	<i>Richard Scott</i>	

The background to Christ the King Parish

It is difficult to envisage a time in the eighteenth century when there were only four Catholics in the city, namely Mrs. Bruckfield, Ann Short and Mr. and Mrs. Lane. They had to travel to Wappenbury, eight miles away, to attend Mass. A chapel was established firstly in a private house in St. Michael's graveyard, and later in 1775 in another house in Little Park Street.

The establishment of a permanent Catholic church in Coventry, the Chapel of St. Mary and St. Laurence, had been brought about by the removal of many legal restrictions on Catholics by an Act of Parliament in 1791, and by the increase in the number of Catholics in the area.

It has been estimated that there were about three or four hundred Catholics in Coventry in 1806, out of a population of just over 16,000. The local newspaper, the Coventry Herald, reported on April 5th, 1827: "Two Protestant Dissenters, a man and a woman, we understand have been converted at the Catholic chapel in Hill Street." This is some indication of how rare such an event must have been.

In 1806 Father John Dawber, a Benedictine monk, bought some land in Hill Street for £155.



Chapel of St. Mary and st. Laurence, Hill Street, 1807

In 1841 Father William Ullathorne, who later became the first Archbishop of Birmingham, came to Coventry and took charge of the parish based on Hill Street. He worked with the help of Mother Margaret Hallahan, so that in a few years the number of converts grew to about a hundred a year. Mother Margaret was soon teaching two hundred girls in the school, without any assistant, and a new church, St. Osburg's, was opened in 1845.

In 1884 Coventry was the largest Catholic centre in Warwickshire, apart from Birmingham, having 2,600 Catholics, and a few years later a second church, St. Mary's, was opened in Raglan Street.

The History of Christ the King and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Coventry

In the twentieth century the population of Coventry increased at an extraordinary rate. The weaving and watchmaking industries had declined towards the end of the nineteenth century, but were replaced by the bicycle and later by the motor car industries. During the years of industrial depression, between the two great wars, Coventry's new industries flourished and the opportunities for employment attracted people from other parts of the country where older industries were dying, for example South Wales and County Durham and also from Scotland and Ireland. Coventry's population grew from 70,000 at the turn of the century, to about 170,000 in 1931, and the city's boundaries were extended to serve this growth.

In 1925 the parish of Coundon was still largely rural in character, with only 76 houses and 335 people. Lying on high, wooded ground, it was a desirable residential area for wealthy Coventry tradesmen, and there were several farms.

In 1928 and 1931 Coundon was incorporated into the city and large scale development took place.

The beginnings of the Parish

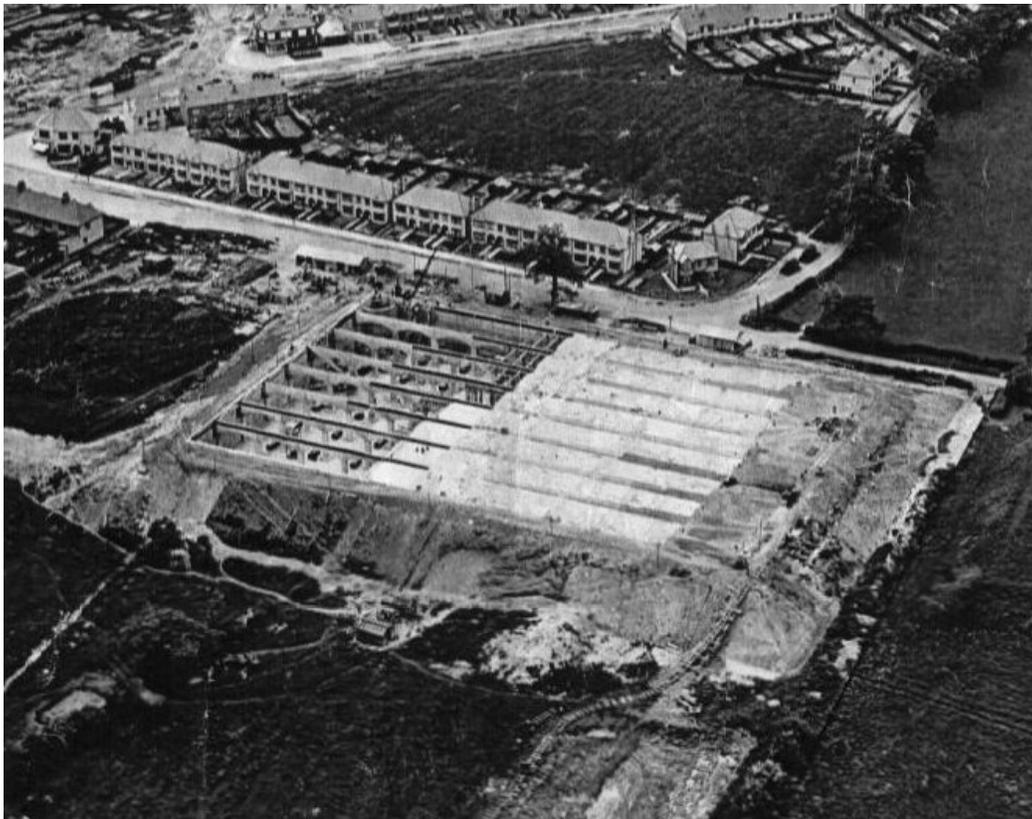
On July 14th, 1932 Father William Rooney became the first Parish Priest of Christ the King. He described the beginning: "I was living a comfortable life in Dudley A couple of days before my holiday the Vicar General, Mgr. Cronin, sent for me and asked me if I would go to Coventry and start a new parish. He informed me that there was a field with a good debt on it and nothing else..." So Father Rooney was "sent to Coventry". The sixth Catholic parish in Coventry had been founded.

The first mass was celebrated on July 15th in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. MacBeath at 202 Barkers Butts Lane. On the following Sunday Mass was celebrated at the Rialto Cinema in Moseley Avenue, which was kindly lent by the managers. Mass continued at the Rialto Cinema until the temporary wooden church was built.



The Rialto Cinema where Mass was celebrated until the temporary wooden church was built

In August, 1932 Father Rooney rented a house in Radford Lane (now re-named Scots Lane). Parishioners began to raise money for the new church, still to be built. The field in Westhill Road was fenced, the hay was cut and sold to help with the new venture.



Picture of the Parish Site: Hay was mown and sold, and the money obtained by the sale went into the buiding fund

Various social activities were organised, and by January 1933 the first part of the new church, a temporary wooden structure, was ready for use. The first altar was made at the Riley Motor Works in Durbar Avenue, after normal working hours, by three workmen at the factory, Bill Gunter, Joe Corp and Len West.



Rented House in Radford Lane in which Fr Rooney celebrated the first Mass

On March 7th 1933 the formal opening took place in the presence of the Archbishop of Birmingham. At first, the building served a dual purpose as church and church hall, the sanctuary being screened off when the main body was needed for social purposes.



The blessing of the original church by Archbishop Williams 7th March 1933

In 1934 a presbytery was built next door to the church. The temporary church soon became inadequate for the needs of the congregation. This is confirmed by Father Rooney when he wrote an article on Christ the King Church in the Coventry Evening Telegraph in 1938. "... More than one

non-Catholic friend in these parts has expressed surprise at the large number of people of both sexes, of all ages, from infants to the ancient, whom they have seen issuing from this church of Christ the King after the services. On an average about 1,100 persons pack themselves into it every Sunday it is always crowded out..."



The altar in the temporary church which was opened on 7th March 1933 in the presence of the Archbishop of Birmingham

A permanent church could not yet be built, because of the cost, so the temporary building was enlarged. Father Rooney was assisted at the weekends by the Franciscan Friars from Olton Friary until the first curate, Father Bernard McKenna, was appointed in July, 1936.

On 1st February, 1938 Christ the King primary school was opened with one hundred and one children on the registers. By August of the same year the numbers had increased.

On 29th August, 1938 the Headteacher, Miss Mary Sircom, wrote in the school log book: "The school re-opened with 172 children on the books. Mrs. Bowness (supply-teacher) is now engaged for half-time services only. Her class numbers 52 and is left in the charge of the Headteacher during the afternoon sessions. The infants' class (in the charge of Miss A. Sircom) now numbers 63, and class 2 (Miss Reid's) numbers 58."

The War Years

The declaration of war in August 1939 brought with it disruption of normal life for many families, when men and women were called from their homes to serve in the armed forces. At home, air-raid precautions were taken and shelters were built in the playground of Christ the King School.

Before receiving Holy Communion, Fasting regulations were still very strict. As a special concession they were relaxed for those working on National Defence only, such as munitions workers, A.R.P. wardens and local defence volunteers. A dispensation, which would allow workers to fast from food and drink for only three hours before receiving Holy Communion, could be obtained from the Parish Priest. Second collections were taken for black-out material for the Church, and for fire-fighting equipment.

Christ the King School was obliged to take in children aged 11 to 14, and a new hut was provided for one hundred senior pupils. In the summer of 1940 there were 320 children. There were air-raid practices every day and the senior boys practised putting out a fire with the aid of a stirrup pump. The first air-raids came in August 1940, and sometimes classes would have to spend a large part of the school day in the shelters and were unable to go home until the all-clear siren had sounded, often after school hours. The school was well used by the local community.

On October 31st 1940, it was recorded in the school log-book:

".. About 80 children have recently left the school owing to continued air-raids. These children have been privately evacuated. The school basement is now being used as an air-raid shelter at night. It is equipped with bunks for this purpose."

When the city was devastated by enemy bombers on the night of November 14th 1940, the log-book entry stated:

"....As a result of the air-raid....children are attending school for registration for evacuation. The entire city is now an evacuation area. Some damage to doors locks and glass have been done to the school. The walls of the hut have been forced from the flooring by blast, the cloakroom and one classroom of the hut has been taken over by the Balloon Barrage contingent (R.A.F.). The remaining classroom has been cleared of furniture to accommodate goods salvaged from St. Osburg's school, church and presbytery, which have been destroyed by enemy action."

The priests from St. Osburg's became temporary paying guests at Christ the King presbytery. Miss Sircom recalls seeing the playground filled with mothers and children from St. Osburg's School at nine o'clock one morning requesting admission to the school.

By Christmas 1940 there were only 58 children on the registers, as many had been evacuated to the villages of Studley, Two Gates and Amington. The children had left in buses from the car park of the Holyhead Public House on November 19th, seen off by Father Rooney, who was in tears. There was another heavy air-raid in April 1941 when a bomb fell in the school garden in front of the hut, which made the latter unsafe. For the duration of the war the schoolchildren were allowed to use Bablake playing fields for their games.

In January 1941 both Father Rooney and Father McKenna left Coventry. Father Rooney had been a popular figure in the parish, well-known to

Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and usually dressed in his cassock and biretta. Collections were made in the community for Catholic charities, particularly for the Coleshill children's homes. The licencees at the Cedars Public House organised coaches to visit the children's homes. Father Flint, to quote Father Gardner, "a man of great energy and genial temperament", became parish priest.

The frequency of air-raids decreased and families began to return to the parish. Father Flint had the task of helping to restore some kind of normal life to the community. Sodalities began to flourish again. The Guild of the Blessed Sacrament, both men's and women's branches, met regularly for their devotions. The Children of Mary were very active, and besides their spiritual activities, undertook pantomimes. One notable production was Cinderella in January 1942, in St. George's Hall, produced by the curate, Father Cyril Adams. Father Flint made an impact on the church debt, paying off £6,000, one idea for raising money being a mile of pennies, organised by the schoolchildren.

The number of children on the school registers increased again, but some indication of the difficulties still being experienced as a result of the war is shown by the fact that in 1943 and in subsequent years until 1948, some of the senior children, accompanied by their teachers, were engaged on potato-picking for a few days in the Autumn.

During the latter years of the war, hostels were set up in the parish to accommodate war-workers, who first of all came from other parts of Britain and Ireland to work in the munitions factories and the mines. These hostels were at Keresley, Brooklands and Sherbourne, for which the parish had spiritual responsibility.

Post war expansion

Peace in 1945 solved some problems but brought about others. Father Flint had moved to Coleshill in 1943 and was replaced in January 1944 by Father W. F. Gardner.

By 1947 the numbers of parishioners had increased to 3,500 but the temporary church could not be extended without weakening the structure, hence it continued to be sometimes overcrowded. A second curate was sent to the parish in 1947 when Father Lyons joined Father Tuite.

In 1946 Christ the King Football Club was founded with Father Tuite being the initial driving force. He often played football on the small field (now the club car park) on Sunday morning after Mass. There was no rule in those days about tackling from behind, and this was his preferred approach.



Father Tuite, Father Gardner and Father Lyons

The raising of the school leaving age to 15 in 1947 meant that more children had to be accommodated in the school. A new hut was erected in 1948, but for six months, until it was completed, a class of 30 seniors had to work in a cloakroom, and the Lady Chapel in the Church was converted into a temporary classroom for 36 infants. Provision had been made for school dinners to be served in a canteen, but so many children were using the facility, that there was an appeal in 1947 for families, living within easy reach of the school, to keep their children at home for the mid-day meal for two weeks during the year. A large extension was built on to the school at a cost of £17,000, and this was completed in 1951.

In the evenings, the school was well used by the parish for meetings and social activities. In his parish review for 1948, Father Gardner reported that the companies of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts were flourishing, the Brownies had been established, but as yet there were no Cubs. The Guide Company won the cup for that year, presented by the Bishop, for the best Guide Company in the Archdiocese. The Union of Catholic Mothers was then, he stated, "... the strongest society in the parish. It is a tower of strength in every kind of good enterprise." The C. Y.M.S. were apparently hampered by the lack of suitable premises, but a small number of members met regularly in the school. Social events, such as the Parish Reunions, were held at the Rialto cinema. Annual Catholic sports days for children in Catholic schools throughout the city were organised in Coundon Park, to raise money for Catholic schools and to provide entertainment for the Catholic community. There were side-shows, five-a-side football, sports competitions and a tug of war. The St. Vincent de Paul Society was very active, and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists held regular meetings.

A large number of Catholic refugees from Eastern Europe, mainly from Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, settled in the parish, at first in the industrial hostels. There were also a large number of Italians. These

different nationalities used Christ the King Church for their worship, and there was a Polish Mass every Sunday at 12 o'clock. The presence of these refugees was a constant reminder of the "Church Suffering" in Eastern Europe, with prayers being offered for Cardinal Mindzenty and Archbishop Stepinac. A large rally was held in the Coventry Hippodrome in 1949 to voice the sympathy of the Catholics of Coventry with Archbishop Beran of Czechoslovakia, who was on trial at the time.

In November 1950 Father Gardner died, after an illness of several months. He was obviously a priest with a sense of humour. For example one Sunday the following notice was read from the pulpit:

"A certain number of men and women make their way up Westhill Road or Hollyfast Road on their way back from local hostelrys, singing songs at the top of their voices. Most of them are Catholics. If you don't mind drawing attention to your nationality by the sort of song you sing, the Parish Priest requests that you at least refrain from drawing attention to the fact that you are a Catholic, by the kind of hymn you sing."

Change and Growth

On January 21st, 1950, Father Carter was installed as Parish Priest. During Father Gardner's illness, Father Toplass had administered the Parish.

Changes began to be made in the liturgy. The Holy Week Services were radically altered in 1952 and for the first time the Easter Vigil Service was held on Holy Saturday night, followed by Midnight Mass on Easter Sunday morning. On the occasion of the Queen's Coronation in 1953, the first evening Mass was held in the Church. Fasting regulations were relaxed for those wishing to receive Holy Communion. No food was to be eaten for up to three hours before Holy Communion and no drink could be taken up to one hour before. The Dialogue Mass was introduced in 1954, when the congregation was permitted to say some of the responses with the acolytes, in Latin. There were two broadcasts from Christ the King Church during the 1950's, one in 1954 when the evening service was broadcast on the National Home Service, and the other the Children's Mass on the Feast of Corpus Christi, in 1958. 12" records of this Mass were later available at a cost of 75 shillings. Father Carter also gave the commentary for the televised broadcast of the Pontifical High Mass from the Catholic High Altar at the Scouts International Jamboree held in Sutton Park in 1957. Andrew Kenny was the first young man the parish had given to the priesthood, and on the Feast of St. Patrick, 1957, he celebrated his first Mass in the Church.



Father Kenny's first Mass in Christ the King Church, March 17th 1957

In spite of the new extensions to the school, there was still pressure on accommodation. In 1952 there were 533 children, but plans were well in hand for the new Bishop Ullathorne secondary schools. These opened in 1953 and the senior children were gradually phased out from Christ the King School, until in 1959 it became a fully re-organised Primary School.

Vatican II and After

1959 was a memorable year. Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council of the Universal Church, and locally, Father McTernan became parish priest.

The Second Vatican Council heralded a period of renewal and change. Amongst the earliest and most visible changes which occurred were those in the Liturgy. In its Constitution on the Liturgy the Council declared: "With the passage of time, there have crept into the rites of sacraments and sacramentals certain features which have rendered their nature and purpose less clear to the people of today; and hence to that extent the need arises to adjust certain aspects of these rites to the requirements of our times." Before any changes were made careful investigations were to be made into the parts of the liturgy to be revised. The use of mother tongue was recommended in the administration of the sacraments. With regard to the Mass it stated: "The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as also the connection between them, can be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful can be more easily accomplished."

Therefore during the 1960's and 1970's the form of the Mass was radically altered. At first the congregation's responses in the Latin Dialogue Mass were translated into English, but most of the Latin spoken by the priest remained. Then the whole of the Mass was said in English, and the Latin Mass became a separate, rarely used rite. At first, the translations tended to be clumsy and the form of words was changed to render them more pleasing in the vernacular.

Structural adaptations were made in the sanctuary. The priest no longer said Mass with his back to the people. Participation by the faithful in the sacred mystery of the Eucharist was encouraged by moving the altar and by the priest facing the people. Lay readers were introduced on the altar to deliver the readings from Scripture. More recently lay deacons have been ordained to assist the clergy in the distribution of Holy Communion. Changes in the administration of the sacraments were made so that the participants or recipients could more easily understand the nature of the sacraments and translations were made from Latin into English. These changes did not come about easily or without opposition. There were some feelings that the beauty and the mystery of the old rite had been lost in the transition, but probably to most people the Latin Mass is only a vague recollection, and to the younger generation it is merely history.

New Buildings

Writing in 1938, Father Rooney posed a question: "In 1932 in the house of Mr. and Mrs. MacBeath, this parish started. In the Basilica of Santo Rialto it was continued in 1933, in a wooden tabernacle. When shall we build Christ Our King His House? Who knows?" The answer came in 1972 when the existing wooden church was extended and reconstructed to become a permanent building. The need for a new church was very pressing, as the number of people attending Mass had increased from 1,400 in 1956 to 3,000 in 1966, and sometimes, at the more popular Masses people were unable to squeeze inside the Church. After consultations with parishioners a church was built with the intention of retaining the atmosphere and character of the old church whilst improving its aesthetic appearance and using permanent materials. A new facade was designed which gave added height, and the entrances replanned, so that they were linked by a series of arches. The seating capacity was increased by extending the Lady Chapel, and the baptistry was transferred from the back of the Church and became part of the Lady Chapel. The wooden walls were rebuilt and faced with bricks. A crying room was incorporated into the plan and the piety stall was no longer confined to a cupboard at the back of the church but now had its own shop within the Church where Catholic newspapers could also be obtained. A new tabernacle, depicting the Last Supper, was placed on the rear wall of the Sanctuary, and a statue of Our Lady designed by Carmel Couchi, a Nuneaton sculptor, was placed in the Lady Chapel. This has since been replaced by an Italian ceramic. A new organ built by the Italian firm, Tamborini, was installed in 1981. The sacristy was transferred to the side of the church, where the priests' garage had once stood, and a new library and meeting room were included in the same block. The library was equipped with a wide range of books of a 'religious' nature, which provided an excellent resource for the parish.



The entrance to Christ the King circa 1982

In 1960 the covenant scheme was started by Derek Moore enabling tax to be reclaimed on contributions made in the Offertory scheme for those who pay tax.

In 1968 the Sanctuary was altered and refurnished to meet the needs of the new Liturgy. This included the altar at which the Priest would face the congregation during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Changes were also made to the lectern at which the scriptures are read and the position of the Priests chair. In 1968 the rule of Friday Abstinence was dropped.

There were many societies associated with the church such as Catholic Men's Society, Union of Catholic Mothers, Cubs and Scouts, Brownies and Guides, Legion of Mary, Knights of St. Columba, Guild of St. Stephen for Altar Servers, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Associations of Catholic Trade Unionists, Youth club, Football Club, Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, Parent teacher Associations, Third order of the Blessed virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, World Poverty Group.

A parish warden scheme was introduced that divided the parish into a number of areas, each allocated an Area Warden assisted by a team of Street Wardens. The main purpose of this was to build up a sense of community within the Parish

Although the number of children attending Christ the King School had increased steadily since it had opened, the number of baptisms registered each year between 1958 and 1966 rapidly increased. There were 73 baptisms in 1958, and in 1966 they had exactly doubled to 146. This meant a corresponding increase in children seeking admission to the school. Mr. Laverty, who had succeeded Miss Sircom as Headteacher in 1965, commented in the school log book that year, that some children had had to be refused admission, and that the average class size was 46. Father McTernan negotiated for the use of two classrooms at Keresley Grange School, where the children were bussed out each day for four years. Even then these extra classrooms proved to be insufficient and a second annexe

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was opened at Holy Family School in 1968. This time two infant classes were bussed out, which an experience was certainly enjoyed by the children (especially on one occasion when a fire broke out on the bus!)

In 1970 St Augustine's School was opened for children living in the Radford area, and 118 children transferred to St. Augustine's Infant and Junior School.



The entrance to St Augustine's School (2006)

The need for a school in the area was highlighted by the number of pupils on the register, which in twelve months grew to nearly 400 pupils. The building had to be extended and a new Infant School was built, which was separated from the Junior School in 1975, with Mr. McGoldrick as head of the Junior School and Mrs. Edwards head of the Infant School. Plans were also made in 1971 for a new Junior School in Scots Lane. These finally came to fruition in November 1973 when the keys to the new school were handed over, even though water was seeping through the floor in the Hall. Mr. Laverty wrote on November 24th 1973, "... The Junior children reported to the old school this morning, picked up their previously prepared bundles of books and walked in classes to the new school which is about a quarter of a mile away. A somewhat hectic day was experienced due to the children's excitement, problems with the plumbing and dining arrangements."

Provision had to be made for secondary education. By the mid-1960's there was no longer enough room in Bishop Ullathorne and Cardinal Wiseman schools for the numbers of Catholic children in the city aged 11 to 18. A decision was made to build a new school on the north side of the city and the opportunity was seized to undertake comprehensive reorganisation of Catholic secondary education. The reorganisation preceded that for the remainder of the City. Cardinal Newman Comprehensive School is set in 36 acres of ground on the edge of the city near Coundon Park. It was opened in 1969, with Mr Mellon as Headteacher and 400 pupils. Children from Christ the King and St. Augustine's Junior Schools transfer to Cardinal Newman School at the age of eleven and Pupils, parents and teachers in the grounds of Cardinal Newman School, taken about 1973. strong academic and sporting links have developed over the years between the three schools. Mutual visits by staff and pupils are made, and each year there is a sports evening at Cardinal Newman School during which the schools compete for trophies in swimming, netball, football and athletics.



The entrance to Cardinal Newman(2006)

In 1970 St Augustine's opened in Radford side of Christ the King Parish.

On 30th August 1973 Christ the King Primary School separated to form two schools namely Christ the King Infant School and Christ the King Junior School. (The primary school was opened in Feb 1938 with 101 on roll, in 1977 the number was 577) Mr J Laverty was appointed head of the Junior School. The school had 312 pupils on roll and staff of ten teachers. The staff and pupils moved into new school buildings on Scots lane on 20th November 1973.



Christ the King Infant School



Christ the King Junior School (2006)

Started in July 1975 and completed in December another major project was the building of Christ the King Community and Social Centre.



Entrance to the Community Centre 2006

The community centre opened in 31st December 1975 taking 6 months to complete. This has two floors with separate function rooms as well as Snooker, pool, darts etc.

In 1979, a new Church was built which provided a more fitting place of worship in Radford, known as St Augustine's. The Church is essentially a simple rectangular building with a clerestory of stained glass.



The entrance to St Augustine's 2006 and inside the Church

1982 was a notable year for Catholics in Coundon. The Golden Jubilee celebrations in the parish have been preceded by the visit to Coventry of Pope John Paul II. There was a general exodus from the parish to Coventry Airport, and on Whitsunday 1982, for the first time in 50 years, there was no Sunday Mass in Coundon. A third of a million Catholics were present in Coventry to attend Mass on Whitsunday led by the Pope.



Popes Visit to Coventry 1982

In 1990 St Augustines Sports Centre was opened featuring 3 squash courts, A sports hall with 4 badminton courts/5-A-Side Pitch, Gymnasium.



Sports Centre, 2006

Father Michael McTernan

Father McTernan was no stranger to Coventry as after his ordination in 1942 he served as assistant Priest in St. Elizabeth's parish until 1949. Appointed as Parish Priest in 1959, became well known particularly through his-work for Catholic education and during his time as Rural Dean in Coventry. Recognition of his work and of the parish was given in 1980 when he was made Prelate of Honour and became Monsignor McTernan. When at last ill health forced him to retire from his own parish in 1993, he went to live with his younger brother, Father Sean, at Perry Bar, in order

to be able to help out as far as he could. Shortly before his sudden death, he had been on Retreat at Oscott, an experience that he had thoroughly enjoyed. Returning home feeling both physically and spiritually refreshed. Father McTernan died on the 26th September, 1996 aged 77. Bishop Gray said in his homily at the Requiem "The tasks of a priest are tasks that are concerned with the ultimate freedom of life" Father Michael will be remembered most of all for his constant kindness and cheerfulness and for the encouragement he gave to his fellow priests, especially when uplift was most needed.

Father Eamon Clarke



Ordained 12th March, 1960 Father Eamon Clarke came to Christ the King in 1993. Father Clarke was already known to many in the Parish as he had been assistant Priest in the Holy Family Parish from 1960 to 1966. He had been Parish Priest in Oxford before coming to Christ the King, Coventry. He had also taught at Newman College, Birmingham and worked with the Catholic Missionary Society. His teaching and preaching skills were very evident and well appreciated. During Father Clarke's time at Christ the King a lot of work was done to improve the Parish buildings. In the 70's and 80's a lot of building had been done. All of these buildings now needed attention. Renovations of Churches, Schools, Parish Centre and Presbytery were undertaken. The interior of the Church sanctuary were re-ordered in 2003. The Parish Finances were put on a much firmer footing. Father Clarke selected two men Gerry O'Reilly and Pat Flanagan as parish Deacons and on 20th June 1999, both men were ordained Deacons.



Deacon Gerry



Deacon Pat

In 2003 the sisters of the Holy Rosary opened a convent in the parish. Three Sisters now live and work from the convent in Gaveston Road. The Parish benefited from these initiatives of Father Clarke. He was an avid reader (with a personal library in excess of 12,000 books) and expanded the parish library and educational resources. He sponsored many charitable causes in the name of the parish and instigated and sponsored the Diocesan training programme for baptism. He celebrated his 40th year of Priesthood in 2000. He retired in 2006, aged 71, due to ill health. He now lives in nearby Kenilworth at St Augustine's presbytery. Father Clarke will be most remembered for his clearly structured and powerful homilies in which his intelligence and strength of faith shone through clearly. He addressed many difficult issues which Catholics have to deal with on a daily basis with sensitivity, humanity and relevance. His

sermons were informative, moving, humorous and sensitive - but never dull - and in that sense they very much reflect the richness of his life and of his faith.

Canon Thomas Farrell



Ordained 16th July, 1983. Appointed Canon in 1996. Prior to this appointment he was the Episcopal Vicar for Oxfordshire Deaneries since 1998. Known as Father Tom he was appointed Parish Priest on the 6th January, 2006.

Joined in September by Assistant Priest Father Richard Scott.

Email: father-tom@ctk-cov.org.uk