

ST. CATHERINE'S

A PARISH STORY 1928-1988





*The Church of St. Catherine of Siena, School Lane, Didsbury, as it is to-day
and a glimpse of the school in the background.*

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FOREWORD

Our parish owes a special debt of gratitude to Owen French who has warmly collected and narrated the story of St. Catherine's, Didsbury.

This year is the Diamond Jubilee of the parish. Many of our parishioners will read this account with affection. It is not only the profile of the Priests involved in the growth of St. Catherine's but the efforts of the many who contributed and still contribute to the life of the parish. The worship of people. Their christenings, their schooling and their promises made over the years in this place of God. The influence of the social centre and the range of activities which take place here every week.

St. Catherine's is a parish which takes in a wide cross section of the community. May this Diamond Jubilee make its mark on each of us.

To put his stamp on the occasion Bishop Kelly has agreed to consecrate our church, which will give special pleasure to some of the older parishioners.

On behalf of Fr. Michael and me, may this Jubilee bring us nearer to the Lord and nearer to one another.

Fr. DAVID McGARRY P.P.



Fr. David McGarry celebrates his Silver Jubilee of priesthood on October 27, 1988. Here in his home parish of Christ The King, Newton Heath he is receiving a gift of vestments on his return after his ordination in Rome in 1963.

THE YEARS OF FOUNDATION

New Parish

"The only property belonging to the parish is a willing young priest, full of energy and hope but empty of purse."

Father Charles Wilkin wrote these words in an appeal for funds shortly after his arrival in Didsbury in the first week of October, 1928.

On September 28, he had received a letter from Mgr L. J. O'Kelly the Vicar General telling him that Bishop Thomas Henshaw 5th Bishop of Salford had appointed him Parish Priest of the new parish of Didsbury.

As yet there was no church, no school, no hall, no priests' house, and everything required for church services was wanting — no chalice, no ciborium, no monstrance, no vestments, nothing.

Charles Wilkin was born in Sheffield on November 7, 1889. He was educated at St. Bede's College, Manchester, and Ushaw. He was ordained priest at the Church of the English Martyrs, Urmston, Manchester, on July 26, 1914, spending the next four years as assistant priest at the Sacred Heart, Darwen. Then for twelve months he served as a Forces Chaplain before returning to Darwen in 1919 remaining there until 1926. He then returned to his old school as procurator until his assignment to Didsbury.

Since his appointment as parish priest was to become effective from Saturday October 6, 1928, Fr. Wilkin had decided that the first Masses must be said the following day. The Liberal Club, Barlow Moor Road, had agreed to rent him a suitable room for 25 shillings (£1.25) for each occasion used.

From St. Bede's he despatched postcards to some eighty Didsbury Catholic families: "Mass will be said for the people of the new Parish of Didsbury at the Liberal Club, Barlow Moor Road, on Rosary Sunday October 7th, 1928 at 9 and 11 a.m."

Fr. Wilkin used his own Chalice and the remainder of the Mass "furniture" was supplied by Fr. Holt and Didsbury Lodge. The congregation at the 9 a.m. Mass was 145 people with 76 at the 11 a.m. The total collection was £6.03. The following Sunday the total attendance was again 221 people but the collection was a little less £4.11-8 (£4.61). Fr. Wilkin announced that the Bishop had dedicated the new parish to St. Catherine of Siena. The Masses on both Sundays were served by the late Raymond Danby who remained parish Master of Ceremonies until shortly before his death in 1981. In 1975 Mr. Danby was awarded the Bene Merenti medal by Pope Paul VI and received

the award from the then parish priest Fr. Jack Fay. Ray Danby was the last surviving member of a group of young parish workers Fr. Wilkin had nicknamed the "Twelve Apostles".

Fr. Wilkin and his team held their early meetings at the house of a great friend of the new parish, Fr. Frederick Holt. His house stood on what is today part of Heald's dairy.

Fr. Holt had retired from Parish work at this time and was acting as unofficial chaplain to Our Lady of Lourdes Home of the Salford Catholic Children's Rescue Society at Didsbury Lodge, Parrs Wood Road.

Sister Everilda, one of the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph (the "Rescue Sisters") who ran the home told the writer; "He not only said Mass for us but did all sorts of odd jobs about the place mending fuses and the like."

But Fr. Holt also devoted time and enthusiasm to fostering the nucleus of the future Didsbury parish and in effect presented his friend Fr. Wilkin with a ready and willing band of helpers.

Frederick Pozzi Holt was born in 1865 and ordained priest in 1890 at Ushaw. He was responsible for establishing the mission of St. Augustine's in High Lane, Chorlton-cum-Hardy (later replaced by St. John's Church).



Bishop Thomas Henshaw laying the Foundation Stone of the Parochial Hall on February 16, 1929. Behind him are Altar Server Ray Danby, Canon Rowntree, and Fr. T. Parker (Bishop's Secretary and later Bishop of Northampton).

St. Catherine's Parish Register of Baptisms carries a note in Fr. Wilkin's hand "that until June 2, 1929, all baptisms were carried out at Didsbury Lodge." The first entry made on the day of the first Liberal Club Mass October 7, 1928, is of the baptism of Hugo Roland Wilkins, son of Charles and Elizabeth Wilkins of Parrs Wood Road, who was born on September 27.

In its Diocesan Notes for November 1928 the Catholic magazine "The Harvest" carried an appeal from Fr. Wilkin; "We have started a club — the P.N. Club: P.N. stands for Pound Note. To become a member, send your name and address with a Pound Note in a registered envelope to the parish priest, Rev. C. A. Wilkin, 12 Grange Lane, Didsbury.

This was the home of Mrs. Kate Cunningham where Fr. Wilkin stayed for his first two months in Didsbury.

In the December edition of The Harvest he was thanking the donor of a Corporal and Purificator, and a Mrs. Catherine for joining the P.N. Club, suggesting that other Catherines follow her example. His note continues: "We have secured a house to let. Oh! the agonies and thrills of setting up house. There are many gorgeous shops in Manchester. We gazed longingly at the windows, and passed by, finishing up at Woolworths. Even at 6d (2½p) a time it takes a lot to furnish a house. We are thinking of calling it Woolworth Cottage. We must build a school and a hall where we can say Mass, and we want at least £5000. Our own people are doing their best, but for a handful of Didsburghers £5000! ... " He ended with an appeal giving his new address: 135 Atwood Road, Didsbury. This was to be St. Catherine's presbytery for the next 29 years.

In his Pastoral Report for 1928 Bishop Henshaw said in a reference to the new parish of St. Catherine that forseeing the day when a new parish must be established in Didsbury, a 2½ acre plot of land had been bought in 1925 by the Diocese. The site occupied a frontage of 106 yards and a commanding position in School Lane, Didsbury. The cost was £1,242 and the Bishop emphasised this was the first burden on the new establishment adding that no buildings yet exist.

First Church

The first priority was to build a hall so money now became an even more pressing problem. According to plans and estimates submitted by Messrs. Hallwoods of Hyde, the building designed to seat 400 would cost £2,600.

The finance board approved and the work began. On February 16, 1929, Bishop Henshaw laid the Foundation Stone.

It says much for Fr. Wilkin's determination and sense of humour that he



Priests and Servers on the steps of the Hall after the opening High Mass, June 9, 1929. Fr. Charles Wilkin (centre), Fr. Vincent Wilkin SJ (left) and Fr. F. Burcough. Servers are Ray Danby, Herbert Torkington, Lauri Duffy and Alban Wilson. Picture below shows the new Hall.



wrote the following for The Harvest, May 1929: "The new Hall in School Lane is nearly finished, but not furnished. Up to now we have begged and borrowed; now we are going to have an "American Tea!", Saturday May 11th 3 p.m. Do come, if it's only to enjoy the sunshine of Didsbury. Didsbury is the Bognor of Manchester. Moral: Don't go to Bognor, come to Manchester, and the money you save on fares spend at our American Tea, Saturday May 11th 3 p.m. Take a train from London Road to East Didsbury, or a No. 40 tram to the Kingsway terminus (be sure to get off at the terminus) and ask anyone where Didsbury Lodge is; or take a Gatley bus and say "Didsbury Lodge return please" and the conductor will say "ninepence please", and he will put you down at the door on Saturday May 11th 3 p.m. Of course if you can't come, send something before Saturday May 11th 3 p.m., to Fr. Wilkin, 135 Atwood Road, Didsbury, Manchester."

With the opening of the Hall on June 9, 1929, the infant parish had its first real home. It celebrated that day with three Masses: 8, 9 and 11 a.m. The last Mass was a solemn High Mass with the following Ministers:—

Celebrant: Fr. Charles Wilkin, P.P.; Deacon and Preacher: Fr. Vincent Wilkin, S.J. (the P.P.'s cousin); Subdeacon: Fr. F. Burcough.

The Altar Servers were: R. Danby, A. Wilson, L. Duffy and H. Torkington. In the congregation were 52 friends of Fr. Wilkin who had arrived in two motor coaches from St. Edward's, Darwen, where he had been curate for twelve years. Various families in Didsbury were their hosts for the day. In response to Fr. Wilkin's appeal for a general communion nearly 200 people received the Host — the Sunday average at that time was 25-30.

First School

The next necessity was a school with the prospect of an even heavier debt for the parish, but a temporary respite came with the generous offer of the use of a former Club House and Pavilion in the grounds of Didsbury Lodge, belonging to the Rescue Society. With the approval of the Education Authority the school opened on August 26, 1929, with 84 children on the Roll.

The Head Teacher was Miss Mary Conway who was assisted by Miss N. Willoughby, and, from September 2nd, Miss M. de Podesta. The building was adapted to the needs of the school by using the former main clubroom for the Infants, the one-time Smoke Room for classes 3 and 4 and the Billiard Room to house classes 1 and 2. The school managers were: Fr. Wilkin, Fr. Holt, Fr. Motler, Mr. Alban Curtis and Mr. Early.

Less than twelve months later St. Catherine's recorded its first academic success when on June 2, 1930, ten-year-old Bernard Crottly won a scholarship to St. Bede's College. On July 7, 1930, Joan Hibbert scored for the

girls with a scholarship to the Hollies. Another first for St. Catherine's came on October 25, 1930 with the first entry in the Parish Register of Marriages, the wedding of Elizabeth O'Keefe and George Vickerstaff. The UCM formed a branch in July and the Children of Mary in December of the next year.

About this time St. Catherine's began to earn its reputation for being an active and lively parish. The parish hall was the focal point. In an upstairs room behind the choir loft Fr. Wilkin aided by Ray Danby, Tommy Igo, and George Hopkins installed a small printing press. The three laymen were all craftsmen printers and working in their spare time began to produce leaflets, booklets, dance tickets and, well before their time, Mass sheets. One regular production was a four page monthly news sheet called *Fontebranda* (named for the home of St. Catherine). Priced at one penny this was inserted in the monthly magazine *The Harvest*. Issue No. 4 dated October 1932 revealed among other items that the parish now consisted of 220 families and the target for providing a new church was at least £10,000, also that the St. Catherine's Players, the newly formed amateur dramatic society, were about to stage two one-act plays, "The Bathroom Door" and "Murder at the Bugginses". An annual subscription of half-a-crown (12½p) entitled members to two tickets. The treasurer was Miss Winnie Dougherty and the secretary Miss Dorothy Crosier. On a more sombre note the news-sheet records the death of Fr. Wilkin's father at the age of 77.

Local traders took the entire back page plus two small spaces inside for advertisements. These must have helped with the production costs.

Improvements had continued to be made in the hall. In February 1932 an unemployed local carpenter Mr. Frank Quinn had made and installed a set of solid oak altar rails. In this year also a Boy Scout Troop was formed and a sports club for the young men of the parish. Cricket was played on Fog Lane Park and, with the Altar end shuttered off, Badminton in the hall.

Miss Conway's meticulously kept Log Book tells us that the school year 1931/32 was plagued by epidemics of diphtheria, scarlet fever and measles but survived without serious damage. On a happier note she recorded not only Feast Days of the Church but Royal Birthdays, celebrations and visits to Manchester most of which provided the children with an extra holiday from school. One such day was the visit of King George V to open the new Central Library in the City. Miss Conway herself had a five day enforced absence from school by being called to Jury service at the Manchester Assizes. Among the children's highlights of the year was the annual pic-nic at Heaton Park when the children, parents and friends were taken in six motor coaches.

By 1935 girls were allowed to become members of the sports club and now tennis was regularly played on the courts belonging to the Didsbury Cricket Club. Dances were held on Saturday nights at the Liberal Club "Half-Crown Hops" to the club members. More than one wedding at St. Catherine's came from romances which began with meetings at the club.



St. Catherine's School children picking bluebells in Lady Simon's wood.

In his spare time Ray Danby and his wife were both teachers of dancing and had much to do with the organising of the dances. Mrs. Danby told me: "Ray was never still" and that dancing apart there was many a night when he was working at the church printing press until after midnight.

New School

Plans were passed for a new school in April 1936. By mid-July hoardings had been erected on the site adjoining the hall and on October 10th Bishop Henshaw made his second foundation stone laying visit to St. Catherine's. The school was ready by April 1937 and was opened and blessed by Canon Rowntree (St. Cuthbert's) on Sunday 4th.

St. Catherine's parishioners and schoolchildren played their part in the celebrations of the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in May. A procession, sports, a torchlight procession and an Old English Fayre were held in Didsbury with St. Catherine's children dancing a "Sixteen hand Reel" in a Country Dance on Ford Bank Fields.

The reality of the brutal civil war in Spain touched the village when in July the Sisters of Our Lady of Lourdes Home at Didsbury Lodge found



Members of St. Catherine's Sports Club in the summer of 1935. Everyone for Tennis?

themselves playing host to thirty Spanish children refugees. With them was one of their own teachers and the clubhouse school which had served St. Catherine's again came into use. Later in March 1938 eleven of the children were admitted to St. Catherine's school.

The following month, April 1938, Canon Rowntree presented the parish with the pulpit from St. Cuthbert's where a replica of the pulpit at Siena Cathedral had been installed. The parish then lost a great friend with the death at Wardley Hall of Bishop Thomas Henshaw on September 23rd of the same year.

The celebration of Fr. Wilkin's priestly Silver Jubilee in July was a bright spot in an otherwise rather gloomy summer of 1939. ARP became the best known initials in the country — Air Raid Precautions: the school corridor "with some adjustments" was deemed to be suitable shelter in an emergency. Gas masks for everyone including babes in arms had been issued, 38 million of them, in the previous September.

St. Catherine's parents and schoolteachers like everyone else faced the problems of evacuating children from the city. On August 26/27 St. Catherine's staged a trial evacuation and on 29th came registration of mothers and babies. Two days before the declaration of war, St. Catherine's children became evacuees at Walton-le-Dale, near Preston. The children from Didsbury Lodge went with the Sisters to Cloughton Hall, Garstang.

Black-out restrictions forced Fr. Wilkin to change the time for Evening Service bringing it forward to 3-30 p.m. Though the black-out was not allowed to interfere with the night watches attended by members of the Men's Confraternity during the Forty Hours Exposition at the time of Quarant' Ore. Many no doubt were soon to find themselves doing night watches of a less devotional nature.

Socials and hotpot suppers designed to raise comforts for the troops became a regular part of parish life and after seven months most of the evacuees returned home. Parents evidently concluding that the evacuation was worse than the risk of being bombed. The school reopened on April 1st, 1940.

Fr. Wilkin will long be remembered not only for his unfailing devotion to his Faith, his parish and his people but for his equally unfailing sense of humour and his occasional forgetfulness. One incident, told to me with great affection illustrates both traits. A lady parishioner asked Fr. Wilkin to say a Mass for a recently deceased relative. Although she attended Mass regularly she never heard the name mentioned. After some three weeks she 'plucked up courage' to ask him if he had forgotten. Fr. Wilkin looked crestfallen and asked "How long ago was this?" The lady told him. He brightened, smiled and said "Oh well, he'll be safely there by now". But of course, the Mass was duly said.

There was one aspect of his priestly duties which Fr. Wilkin did not enjoy — asking for money. Writing appeals in *The Harvest* or in parish news-letters was one thing, but standing up in the pulpit was another matter. The parish debt fell badly in arrears. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception 1940 Fr. Holt, then aged 75, preached a forthright sermon in St. Catherine's castigating the parishioners telling them that they should not place their P.P. in the position of having to beg for money. It took another thirteen years but in 1953 the parish was free of debt. Fr. Holt did not live to see this great day for he died aged 83 on July 9, 1949.

St. Catherine's present church might have stood today at the corner of Ford Lane and Dene Road. Forseeing that the School land could be fully used for the school this three quarter acre plot was bought in February 1944 at a cost of £1000. In the event the land was not required for the church and eventually it was sold for the building of Holt House. Named **not** after Fr. Holt but the philanthropist, Sir Edward Holt whose father was responsible for founding the Holt Radium Institute at Withington.

For many years the site was marked by a wayside Crucifix which on May 26, 1946 had been blessed by Fr. Vincent Sweeney and which stands today on the forecourt of St. Catherine's in School Lane. Vincent Sweeney had been one of the first pupils at St. Catherine's in 1929. He was ordained priest in St. Catherine's by Bishop Marshall on July 29, 1945, when he was presented with a set of vestments by the children of his old school. In later years he was to become P.P. of St. Anne's Crumpsall.

The end of the war in Europe on May 8, 1945 was signalled in Miss Conway's Log Book by a thick red entry which records that after a service of Thanksgiving the school was given a four day holiday to join in the general rejoicing.

St. Catherine's from 1929 until 1946 was a one priest parish but in November 1946 the Bishop appointed Fr. Walter Dempsey to assist Fr. Wilkin. Fr. Dempsey who had been ordained on May 14, 1931 remained in Didsbury until the end of 1951 when he was appointed P.P. of St. Joseph's, Shaw, Oldham. He was replaced by Fr. Denis Sheeran. Fr. Dempsey died on January 14, 1984, at the Alexian Bros. Nursing Home, Moston.

Fr. Wilkin had himself, and had instilled into his parish a deep affection for Our Lady of Walsingham. On March 25, 1949 Fr. Wilkin blessed a statue of Our Lady, an exact replica of the Walsingham statue presented to the Holy Father, which he had installed on a side Altar on the Gospel side of the church. The sermon that day was preached by Fr. Pacificus, O.F.M.C from Walsingham. Today the statue stands in one of the classrooms at St. Catherine's school.

The end of the school's midsummer term on August 27 1951 presented Miss Mary Conway the task of writing her most difficult entry in her Log



St. Catherine's School teachers 1945. Back row: A. Kirkbride, N. Holt, B. Coleman. Seated in front: M. Hanley, Mary Conway and B. Walsh.

Book, recording her own retirement after 22 years as founder head teacher. Miss Conway's successor was Mr. Thomas White who had been with the school since August 1949 when he became the first male teacher in the life of the school. It would now be his turn to write the annual springtime entry in the Log: "Twenty six-year olds and a teacher went to pick blubells in Lady Simon's wood". Sadly Miss Conway did not enjoy a long retirement for she died in hospital on St. Valentine's day 1953. School staff and parishioners as well as many former pupils attended her requiem.

New Church

Free from debt for the first time the parish now set about raising money for Fr. Wilkin's and their greatest wish — a real church building. There were changes in the parish over the next two years; in 1954 the number of Sunday Masses was increased to four 8, 9, 10 and 11. Fr. Denis Sheeran left to be assistant priest at St. Mary's, Blackburn in 1955 and Fr. John Henderson took his place. The school's first Parent Teachers Association was formed in 1954. Architects Arthur Fairbrother and Partners were commissioned to plan the new church with Mr. Desmond Williams as the Project Architect.



*Above: A 1955 First Communicants group with Fr. Wilkin and Fr. Sheeran.
Below: Little Margaret Devine and her retinue pose in front of the High Altar (of the original Church/Hall) after the ceremony of Crowning of Our Lady in May 1957.*



Plans were approved and work began on the new church in mid 1956. Fr. Wilkin, now ill and confined to bed, was unable to lay the Foundation Stone but Bishop Beck paid him the tribute of performing the ceremony himself on October 13, 1956.

The simple but imposing church with a fine purpose built presbytery adjoining was ready by the following December. A study of the building before the opening revealed that though the architect was clearly influenced by the Romanesque, a medieval European style which preceded the Gothic, he had made no attempt to build a replica of a Romanesque church. "This would have been far too expensive," he said. The influence is seen in the use of round arches, bambino tiles and pitched roofs with the strongest characteristic of the period in the tower which is an anglicised version of the campanile much in evidence in the Northern part of Italy.

The main contractors for the building of church and presbytery were F. Taylor & Co. (M/c.) Ltd., of Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester. They used light coloured machine made clay bricks for the exterior with coping stones on tower and aisle of reconstructed Lake District Stone. Steel roof trusses were used with the ceiling of a fibrous plaster. The interior brickwork was plastered and the pillars faced with German type marble.

Although the church is built on a roughly east-west axis the traditional placing of the altar at the east end has been reversed. The Altar is at the west end, the tower and main doors at the east. Normal custom of having the baptistry located close to the main doors was followed. It was placed at the end of the narthex opposite the tower doors. Wrought iron gates protected the font which was approached down two steps.

Two smaller wrought iron gates in the mahogany altar rails led to the Sanctuary up four steps, the High Altar being approached by a further four steps. Six natural stone columns with a background of Italian marble formed the High Altar behind which hung a life-size crucifix against a dark green dossal curtain, above both a canopy was suspended from the ceiling. There was a change in the location of the choir loft which was placed over the sacristies at the side of the Sanctuary. The more usual choir position in the gallery over the narthex at the east end of the church provided more seating accommodation bringing the total capacity to some 470. At this time there were no decorative Stations of the Cross just the plain small wooden crosses marking the 14 stations.

On December 7th 1957 with his life's ambition and dearest dream almost realised Fr. Charles Wilkin died in Barnes Hospital, Cheshire. The joy of his parishioners over their new church was laden with their sorrow at the loss of their beloved parish priest and two days later the first Mass on the opening day, December 15, 1957 was for the repose of his soul. Later on that day,



Bishop Beck laying the Foundation Stone of the present church on October 13th, 1938



The present Church shortly after opening. On the right is the original Church/Hall.



The procession, headed by the Bishop about to enter the Church. Behind the Bishop is Alderman Leslie Lever, the Lord Mayor of Manchester.

High Mass was celebrated by Dean C. Catterall assisted by Fr. Dempsey and Fr. Sheeran following the blessing of the church both inside and out by Dr. G. A. Beck, 7th Bishop of Salford. More than forty Clergy were present together with a massive turnout of parishioners and friends. Also present were distinguished Didsbury residents, the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Alderman Leslie Lever J.P., M.P; The Lady Mayoress; Alderman Mrs. Eveline Hill; and other City Councillors.

The Bishop announced that he had appointed Fr. Denis Sheeran to succeed Fr. Wilkin as Parish Priest. The new P.P. was already well known and well liked in the parish from his five years (1950-1955) as assistant priest to the late Fr. Wilkin, but it was none the less the end of one era — and the start of another . . .

THE YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT

Lady Chapel

Fittingly the new era began with a birth. On December 22, 1957, just seven days after the opening of the new church Fr. Sheeran made a firm entry in the parish register of baptisms 'New Church' and recorded the christening of Laurence Sudlow, son of Wilfred and Mary Sudlow of Bamford Road, Didsbury. A few weeks later came the first wedding in the new building, that of Norman Tonks and Elizabeth Simington on January 4, 1958.

Fr. Denis Sheeran was born in the Cathedral parish in Salford on November 28, 1909. He studied at St. Bede's College, Manchester, and at the English College, Valladolid, Spain, and was ordained priest at the Cenacle convent, Manchester on June 6, 1936, by Bishop Henshaw. With him to St. Catherine's this quiet and gentle priest brought a wide parochial experience gained over twenty-one years as a curate in a number of differing parishes. He had a special interest in the school for he was also Chief Religious Inspector of Schools for the diocese.

No longer needed as a place of worship the old Hall now added 'school dining room' to its many other uses and soon more than 100 meals a day were being cooked and served there daily.

There was a slight setback for the school when Our Lady of Lourdes Home, Didsbury Lodge, was sold to the Electricity Board. The Nursery class begun in 1949 in the original school at the Lodge by the then Headteacher Mary Conway was forced to close down.

A rather different setback occurred on March 12, 1962, when headmaster Tom White's school-log entry for the day recorded with masterly brevity "At 4 p.m. the school boiler burst". Eighteen months later an equally brief entry noted "A new boiler was installed".

Mr. White's annual report for 1966/67 showed that classrooms had been altered; and a link between buildings built with two rooms, the Head's study and the secretary's office and a foyer.

Whether by oversight in the planning or lack of funds the new church lacked a chapel in honour of Our Lady. An appeal from Fr. Sheeran brought a quick response from the people and before the end of 1959 they had added a simple but delightful little Lady Chapel built on the side of the church at the west end.

Another need was fulfilled in 1961, the year of Fr. Sheeran's priestly Silver Jubilee, when the outer porch was built on in front of the main doors.

This provided some much needed protection against the cross wind, sheltered sleeping babes in prams and cycles. An apparitor of the time perhaps best unnamed, recalls that it also served another purpose. "I remember one morning after Mass Fr. Sheeran saying to me 'I do not really mind you taking a breather during my homily, but do you have to keep walking up and down across the open door puffing your pipe'".

About this time there were two changes made inside the church. The mahogany altar-rails were replaced by smooth stone rails resting on marble pillars and wrought iron gates with a new design. The Stations of the Cross were brought vividly to life by hand carved scenes of the passion of Our Lord.

Planned Giving

Both Anglican and Catholic churches were being approached by professional fund-raisers who for an inclusive fee of some £2000 (in 1963) would set up a system called Planned Giving. In brief the idea was to replace the haphazard and widely varying amount raised each week by the Mass collections with parishioners giving a promised regular weekly amount. This money would be placed in a numbered envelope which would be supplied and put in the collection in the usual way. The initial promise card and master-list of names and numbers would be held by the P.P. and only he would know who was giving what amount. Lay counting teams working on a rota basis would open envelopes and record amounts but would have no means of associating names with numbers.

St. Catherine's had started from scratch before and had no intention in paying £2000 for something they could do for themselves. Fr. Sheeran promptly formed a committee of parishioners who worked out the details of the scheme, prepared an explanatory brochure, and delivered a copy with promise cards and envelopes to every family in the parish. The promise cards filled in and sealed in the special envelopes were later collected and delivered to Fr. Sheeran. The committee members were briefed to answer questions but forbidden to suggest amounts to be promised. Not everyone agreed to take part but the system went into operation in January 1964 and is still going at the time of writing. The cost to the parish was less than one tenth of the professional fee.

The Mass

The end of 1964 brought an even greater change. In Rome the Second Vatican Council was more than half-way through its deliberations. Promulgated in 1959 by Pope John XXIII, it had begun in 1962. But neither England nor Wales were prepared for the far reaching changes in Catholic thinking and



Fr. Bernard Franks and Tom White present First Communion certificates to St. Catherine's children in 1969.

practices which were to be introduced and there was considerable confusion. This was clearly evident in the change of the Mass from Latin to English which was done gradually. Thus a Low Mass from the first Sunday of Advent 1964 was said partly in Latin and partly in English and by 1966 was entirely in English, but in 1967 the Catholic Truth Society's Simple Prayerbook gave it partly in Latin and partly in English again.

Understandably not everyone welcomed the change and for a long time more than one devoted worshipper continued to murmur the Rosary from Entrance to Blessing. For others it was a change long overdue and has led to a better general understanding of the Mass.

Vocation week 1965 began with the annual procession in Honour of Our Lady and ended on Sunday May 10 with the banns of Holy Orders being published for a young St. Catherine's parishioner, Patrick John McKeown of Spring Gardens, Didsbury.

Fr. McKeown was ordained priest in St. Catherine's just over twelve months later by Bishop Holland on June 4, 1966.

Fr. Francis Brown who in 1958 had succeeded Fr. Henderson as curate, left in February 1966 to become P.P. at St. Anselm's, Whitworth, Rochdale, and was in turn succeeded by Fr. Bernard Sparks. For a short time St. Catherine's also had the services of a young recently ordained priest, Fr. Michael Collins, who is now probably best remembered for his bright yellow socks and his undoubted skill as a guitarist.

Two years later on September 25, 1968, Fr. Sheeran moved to St. Gilbert's, Brookhouse, Eccles, as parish priest, and at the time of writing is living in retirement at Nazareth House, Prestwich.

St. Catherine's next parish priest was 58-year-old Manchester born Fr. Donatus Burke. He was ordained priest on July 21, 1935, in St. Anne's Church, Fairfield, Manchester, by Bishop Henshaw. Fr. Burke served as curate in a number of parishes and as parish priest of Sacred Heart, Darwen, before being appointed to St. Catherine's. As it turned out however, Fr. Burke did not stay long at St. Catherine's for early in December 1968 he transferred to St. Joseph's, Heywood. Fr. Burke died on August 18, 1979.

A good friend of Fr. Sheeran's was now appointed to St. Catherine's from St. Sebastian's, Pendleton where he had been parish priest since 1961. This was Fr. Bernard Dominic Franks, a Burnley man born April 23, 1912. He was ordained priest on May 22, 1937, in St. Joseph's College, Upholland, by Archbishop Downey of Liverpool. He served in two parishes as curate before returning to his old college at Valladolid as professor for the next twelve years before being appointed to St. Sebastian's. A warm and friendly man he endeared himself to the people of St. Catherine's who heard with dismay the news of his sudden death on September 3, 1970 while on holiday at Kilkee, County Clare, Ireland, with Fr. Sheeran and two other priest friends.

THE YEARS OF EXPANSION

Fr. John Fay

St. Catherine's Community Centre has been open six months almost to the day. The old Hall virtually rebuilt, provides a meeting place for every section of the parish, from very young to senior citizens. And within the space of these months the big question, 'was it needed?', has been answered by an emphatic 'Yes!'

The play-group is the first there on a working day. Then from 2-4 p.m. the Sewing, Cookery and Keep-Fit Classes take over. In the evening, Brownies, Scouts or the Union of Catholic Mothers take their turn.

By far the largest group is the St. Catherine's Social Club with a membership of almost 500. The Social Club evenings — Saturday and Sunday — are very popular and most enjoyable with cabaret, dancing and bar service.

The Social Club success has been largely the result of excellent team-work by an indefatigable committee. This has done much to foster a community spirit . . .

"Now we have not only a Community Centre but a real community spirit. Building the latter takes much longer than building the former."

So wrote Fr. John Fay in the St. Catherine's weekly bulletin for October 1, 1972. Two years earlier in October 1970, it was a saddened and somewhat bewildered parish which had greeted him on his arrival to be St. Catherine's third parish priest since September 1968.

Like the founder of the parish Fr. Charles Wilkin, Fr. Fay came to Didsbury with a vision of leading a lively go-ahead parish with a strong sense of community. In 1928 the community spirit had to be created. In 1970 it had to be revived.

Fr. John Fay was born in London on May 26, 1919, he went to school in Manchester, studied at St. Bede's and St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, and was ordained priest in Salford Cathedral by Bishop Marshall on July 25, 1943. After obtaining his M.A. degree at Oxford University he taught at St. Bede's College, Manchester from 1948 to 1960.

He was in his tenth year as National Chaplain to the Young Christian Students and working in London when Bishop Holland recalled him to take over at St. Catherine's.

The 'revival' began with the old hall, although at one stage Fr. Fay even cast eyes on the then near derelict former Capitol Cinema close by the church as a possible Community Centre for the entire neighbourhood. Soon the old hall was in use for everything from an emergency school classroom and school dining room to the base for every activity group in the parish. Disaster in the form of dry rot struck in April of 1971. Professional investigation showed that the only solution was demolition and complete rebuilding.

This was beyond the scope of the parish pocket, but with savings and a generous loan from the diocese, who waived their usual rule for borrowing parishes — collect three-quarters of the amount first then borrow the remaining quarter, the virtually useless hulk was turned into a functional community centre.

Social Club

The founding of the Social Club was an inspired idea at a time when the money raised was found to be too little. Both Community Centre and Club opened in April 1972. The immediate success of the Club may well have influenced the men to improve their dancing for the dance classes run by Mr. & Mrs. Ray Danby were moved from Wednesday afternoons to evenings to allow more men to attend.

An Over 60s Luncheon Club was opened in 1973 in the community centre. Run by the Social Services it attracted people from a wide area. These clubs like the Meals on Wheels service were originally run by the WRVS.

It became abundantly clear early in 1979 that an extension was needed to the Community Centre to enable more than one group to use it at the same time. Plans were drawn up and permission obtained but, as usual, the main problem was Ways and Means. The Social Club committee came up with the idea of contacting the Manpower Services Commission and with their help the project came to life in August 1981. Briefly the involvement with the MSC meant that provided the parish or club paid for the materials the Government would pay the wages of the previously unemployed men working on the job.

This arrangement helped both the parish and some of the locally unemployed. The working plan was designed so that work could continue, albeit with some inconvenience, to cater for the various groups using the building. The first employee was the Site Manager who began work with a clerk and a general labourer on August 10, 1981.

Towards the end of 1982 the Community Centre had taken on its new life and the Social Club celebrated its ten years of existence by opening its new lounge bar. The club was now able to operate seven nights a week without encroaching on another group's activities.

The writer is indebted to Mr. Michael O'Hare, long serving Chairman of the Social Club Committee for the following:

In addition, the Community Centre, which was originally able to accommodate only a single group at a time, now became a multi-purpose building enabling up to four groups to use the Centre at the same time. The separate areas consist of, the main Hall, the Upstairs Room, the Side Extension and the Club Lounge Bar.

The Social Club which in 1987 celebrated its 16th year of existence now caters for nearly 750 members as well as hundreds of welcome visitors each year. The rules of the Social Club embody the original and continuingly important objective of "catering for the Social and spiritual welfare" of the members and each year at the Annual General Meeting members are reminded of this all important responsibility.

Each Friday night the main hall is used by members and guests playing cards, darts, trivial pursuit and skittles or just discussing all the major problems of the nation — and of course arriving at instant solutions that somehow the politicians just don't see. These games nights have in particular brought many people closer together and the gusts of laughter evident on most occasions give testimony to their success and popularity.

Saturday nights provide the weekly local entertainment that includes

Country and Western groups, Jazz Bands, Trios, Quartets, Duos, Cabaret and twice yearly a fantastic West Indian Steel Band. Invariably the charge for these good quality acts cost members under £1. It is on Saturday nights that the Social Club has run many charity dances and provided welcome funds for such worthy causes as The Little Sisters of the Poor, The St. Vincent de Paul Society, Accross, The St. Mary's Mulberry Street Roof Fund, sick members trips to Lourdes, Christie Hospital and of course our own parish amongst many other charities in need.

The Sunday old and modern time dancing is provided by a resident organist together with the inevitable bingo and periodically quizzes that have enabled many to exercise their skills regarding sport and general knowledge. Many quiz nights have produced much discussion as to the veracity of the 'official' answers of well known facts.

The lounge bar each weekday provides for members to enjoy a social drink in a convivial atmosphere in a well appointed and comfortable environment.

St. Catherine's Social Club provides more than just a social centre for the parish. The club has many long established members from most parishes within the Didsbury area and several members from far away towns and cities who enjoy the warm friendly atmosphere. Over the years the Social Club has brought more than a few members together that has culminated in marriage. Other have been brought back to the Catholic Church through contact with members and a small number have been welcomed into the Catholic Faith through their association with St. Catherine's Social Club.

All of this, and please God more positive developments to follow over the years, have been made possible, in the first instance by the vision and will of Father J. P. Fay and the many Committee members and members over the years who have worked tirelessly and selflessly to maintain the original standards set down at the first meetings to establish St. Catherine's Social Club as a Centre that provides a meeting place for all, together with wholesome family entertainment each weekend.

So, as is often said there are lots of good things happening at the Social Club, all that is required is for members and guests to continue to support and enjoy them.

Parish Council

Memories of the old St. Catherine's Sports Club dances were unexpectedly revived at the 'Grand Celebration Dinner Dance' at Belle Vue on January 20, 1972 when the leader of the band recalled that he had played for the club's weekly 'Hops' at the start of his professional career in the thirties. The dinner

dance was to launch Fr. Fay's campaign 'Renewal '72' which had been planned at a number of parish meetings. The object was to tap the skills and energy available among the parishioners and invite them to volunteer their time and talents into work for the parish.

The scheme provided a launch pad for the revival of the community spirit and the results were seen in the founding of the Social Club and the wide variety of activities which took place in the Community Centre.

It may well have played its part in the acceptance of the idea of a Parish Council which was broached in 1975 although more directly the Council was part of the Vatican 2 inspired greater involvement of the laity in parish affairs.

Between February and the first week of Advent 1975 a steering committee formed a provisional council. The parish priest was to be president but not chairman.

The Council was to consist of elected members representing Social, Welfare, Liturgy, Youth, Finance and representatives of the five Sunday Masses from which a chairman and a secretary were to be elected annually. Later a member for Catechesis and a member for Ecumenism were added. The first elections were held at the end of 1975.

A keen and long serving member of Council who has also served her time in the office of Chairman, Mrs. Jacqui Feely, sums up the Council's first dozen years as follows:

'The Council was set up to be a forum where the views of priests and parishioners could be discussed and plans drawn up for further development with consultation.

The people voted on to the Council were seen as representing the whole parish and at the same time having their own personal interest in one of the areas represented. Often unfortunately misunderstood, it was never set up to 'Do' anything although over the years the individuals have been 'doers' in their own right with their own organisation with the parish — whether that be S.V.P., U.C.M., C.A.F.O.D., Social Club, Legion of Mary, Youth Club, Mother and Toddler or whatever — apologies to any organisation left out !

The Council have discussed many issues over the years including missions, renewals, setting up various groups, the celebration of the Sacraments in the parish and the changing of Mass times to name but a few.

The main criticism over the years has been the lack of communication with the rest of the parish. This is now being tackled by an additional representative for Communication. It is hoped that the Parish Council will grow stronger and more relevant to the rest of parish life.

The introduction of the new liturgy continued slowly and the new rite for nuptial Mass was used for the first time in St. Catherine's on December 12, 1970, at the marriage of Andrea Mary Hill to David Robert Lowe. Lay readers made their first appearance, all men volunteers in 1970, women were not to be seen in the role for some time.

Singing by the congregation was encouraged not entirely successfully despite the introduction of hymn-books, and missalettes replaced the long cherished but obsolete personal missals. The apparitors had another tidying up task after Mass.

There were hints in 1972 of two Continental practices being adopted: a Mass on Saturday evenings which would fulfil the obligation, and the receiving of the Host in the hand at Communion, both were ruled out at the time but were adopted later. The former in 1976 and the latter in 1984 when the popular Saturday 7 p.m. Mass was introduced at St. Catherine's on August 4.

In 1976 also the congregation began, with some diffidence at first, to exchange the sign of peace with each other early in the Communion rite. The language of the new liturgy was not yet finalised but in 1975 it was announced that the official English version was to be the one adopted in the United States and Australia and not the one currently in use in the U.K. For example: in the Creed, "One in substance with the Father" to be replaced by "Of one being with the Father".

At this point there had been very little alteration in the lay-out of the church although the baptismal font had been brought into the body of the church and placed near to the temporary Altar, the baptistry had been converted into a Piety Stall. Further internal reorganisation was left until Church, Sacristy, and Presbytery had been repaired and decorated. To pay for this a fund-raising drive was made in January 1974.

An experiment inspired by the new liturgy began in 1975 and is now well established. This is the Children's Liturgy now linked to the 9.30 a.m. Mass but then to the 10 a.m. Mass. Organised by Fr. Fay and a group of parents it catered for the younger children giving them their own liturgy in the Community Centre for the first part of the Mass.

After the Bidding Prayers they joined the main Mass by forming the Offertory procession and taking up seats reserved for them at the front of the church. The music for this Mass was and still is provided by Mr. John Thomas and his band of youthful musicians.

New Altar

It was suggested by Bishop Burke on his 1977 Visitation that as part of the preparation for the Parish Golden Jubilee in 1978, and in keeping with the requirements of the new liturgy, the temporary Altar should be replaced by a more permanent structure. This clearly was something for the Parish Council to discuss and for parishioners to offer suggestions and comment. The first decision was to experiment with varying layouts.

A week or so later incoming congregations were faced with the first of these, the Altar was at the centre of one side with the pews arranged in four blocks. This had the effect of bringing everyone into closer contact with both Altar and Celebrant, but it also created some problems at Communion and called for some rapid improvisation by the apparitors taking the collection. Not everyone agreed with this idea but all appreciated the need to give it a fair trial.

Making the temporary Altar at the top of the Sanctuary steps permanent was ruled out because it was said that since the Sanctuary floor was also the roof of the boiler house it would not stand the weight of the new Altar. At their January 1978 meeting the Council decided to hold a parish referendum in February. The voting papers took the form of two layouts — one with the Altar at the side, one on the traditional axis but with the Altar forward of the Sanctuary steps.

The result of the voting in which 1198 people cast their votes was: For the centre position 405; for the traditional 793. A majority for the traditional of 388.

Once the decision was made the planning of the new-look interior went rapidly ahead, but the implementation was gradual, on the pay-as-you-go principal and it was several years before the whole picture became clear. The new marble faced Altar on its green carpeted platform was lit from above by new lights from a circular corona of metalwork suspended from the roof. One light was focussed on a bronze figure of Christ the King ascending above the rood screen which effectively cut off the former Sanctuary. The sides of the new Sanctuary were marked by the former communion rails.

A secure area was created round the side door which enabled the main part of the church to be kept locked when not in use for Mass or other services while still allowing people to come in for prayer or meditation. The Tabernacle on a marble faced plinth and surmounted by an illuminated Crown of Glory faced this area as did a statue of Our Lady placed in the centre of the screen cutting off the former Lady Chapel.

The large Crucifix which for so long had dominated the sanctuary from above the High Altar gave place to elaborate gilt, but fake 'organ pipes' having no real connection to the new organ below them. The Crucifix no longer in the vicinity of the Altar hung on the wall at the back of the gallery.

There appears to be no record of what use was intended for the former Lady Chapel which once cut off by the extended rood screen became disused. Certainly not all the plans reached fruition, the corona for instance was intended to be a glass fibre and wrought iron Crown of Thorns made, it was said, by St. Mark's School.

School Extension

Plans were approved in January 1972 and building completed by September to give St. Catherine's school a new classroom, cloakroom and toilet, and an assembly hall for the infant and Junior school. Space for this extension was found by taking part of the presbytery garden and part of the car park.

There was acknowledgement for the school's sporting prowess at the end of the school year 1974/75 when the Manchester Evening News reported: "There can't be many primary schools which have a better sporting record than St. Catherine's, Didsbury. In two weeks the children won five trophies for events in which dozens of Manchester schools competed. The five Captains (all aged 11) of the school's victorious teams were: Marion Crehan (T. H. Sheridan Trophy for the winning girl team in the Manchester Catholic Schools' Athletics Association meeting); Caroline Swift (Manchester Athletic Club Trophy for Primary Schools); Bernard Mulvey (South Central Area Schools' Cricket Association Junior Trophy); Clare Armstrong (MCSAA Primary Girls Relay Shield); and Anne Jennings (Manchester Schools' Rounders Association Area Trophy)."

This success was no flash-in-the-pan for among the school's other award winning feats the cricket team swept the board in 1982 by becoming (RP Primary School) League Champions, Manchester 8-a-side Champions, Manchester Cup Winners, winning representatives of Manchester against Cheshire, Wirral and others.

The summer of 1984 was marked by a more academic win for the school when the youngsters were among the 30 prizewinners out of the 33,000 entries in the W. H. Smith Young Writers' competition. St. Catherine's had one individual mention — Luisa O'Hare, "because the judges particularly enjoyed reading her work". Luisa was then aged eight.

Over the years the school choir under deputy head Mr. Hanbury have won many trophies at various festivals and choir and school orchestra have made an L.P. record which sold around one thousand copies in the parish.

The church had a share in the limelight when televised Mass featured St. Catherine's in 1973 on B.B.C.'s 9 a.m. Morning Service programme. Inevitably many people stayed home to watch and came to a later Mass. Ten years later

Granada T.V. moved in to televise Mass at 10 a.m. on Trinity Sunday May 29, 1983. Granada had asked for a discussion on Holy Trinity by members of the parish to be broadcast immediately before Mass. This called for reorganisation of Mass times so that Mass could begin promptly on time. Early comers were able to follow the discussion on T.V. monitor sets in the church. Again there was an overall drop in the day's attendance, this time of about 200, and a consequent drop in income. Against that and some damage to tiles and lights, which Granada repaired, the parish did receive letter of appreciation from all over the country.

Repairs in 1977 were less easily accomplished when the school roof demanded instant attention and the school heating system needed an overhaul and refit. In the church the main boiler was about to expire. It was the latter news which Fr. Fay relieved with a touch of his usual humour: "Overheard at the North West Gas Board offices recently 'Fr. Fay of St. Catherine's would like someone to call him about a high-speed conversion'."

Two St. Catherine's parishioners entered the Church in this period. John Hovington of Morningside Drive, was ordained in St. Catherine's on April 19, 1975, by Bishop Brewer, Auxiliary to the Bishop of Shrewsbury, the neighbouring diocese. Fr. Hovington said his first Mass at 11 a.m. the following day in St. Catherine's. From Rome a year or so later came the news that David Quilligotti who was baptised in St. Catherine's in 1954 had been ordained Deacon by Bishop Restieaux of Plymouth at the Church of St. Mary of the Snows at Palazzola, just south of Rome and close by the summer home of the Holy Father at Castel Gandolfo.

In August, 1978 St. Catherine's joined the rest of the Catholic world in mourning the death of Pope Paul VI and in rejoicing at the election of Poland's Cardinal Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II. Two months later St. Catherine's again rejoiced when they celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the parish. Fifty different displays of flowers decorated the church for the Jubilee Mass on October 8, 1978, which was attended by the Bishop. There was also a special Mass for the Sick and a great Supper-Dance at Owen's Park.

There were well earned Papal Honours for two devoted men of the parish: Mr. Tom White retiring after 27 years as headmaster of St. Catherine's School and Mr. Hugh Devon the retiring Scout Leader. Both were awarded the Papal Cross — Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice (for work for the Church and Pope). For his long service to St. Catherine's Scouts Mr. Devon was presented with his award by Fr. David Lannon, Diocesan Chaplain to the Scouts. Mr. White received his award at the Thanksgiving Mass and celebration evening organised by St. Catherine's P.T.A. to mark his retirement.

When Mr. White died early in 1987 the Requiem at St. Catherine's on Tuesday February 3rd, was concelebrated by: Fr. Peter Robinson of St. Vincent's, Bramhall (Mr. White's last parish priest); Monsignor Canon Joseph Lakin, Fr. David McGarry, Fr. John Fay, Fr. Denis Sheeran and Fr. Michael Kujacz. In the congregation of just over 400 were many former pupils and colleagues of Tom White as well as the present headmaster, Mr. Fred Johnston (who is himself a former colleague) and his staff together with a strong contingent of present pupils. It was a moving, dignified and fitting tribute to a well loved and respected headmaster and fellow parishioner.

Credit Union

Between January and May 1980 a Credit Union was established in the parish. This is an association of members (over the age of 16) who enjoy a 'Common Bond' and save money regularly.

These savings are then made available to any member requiring a loan. St. Catherine's 'Common Bond' is of course a continuing association with the church, the schools or the social club in St. Catherine's parish. Since the scheme was launched a Junior Credit Union has been formed in the parish and is administered from the school.

Heralded as the most significant event in the history of the Church since Vatican II, the National Pastoral Congress was held in Liverpool over the May Bank Holiday weekend of 1980. More than 2,000 people took part in the discussions which covered the many and varied aspects of church life.

From St. Catherine's as a lay representative of the Deanery went a young married active parishioner Barry Rawlinson. Asked for his reactions to the Congress seven years on he says:

"The Congress was impressively representative, with delegates of almost every age and background. Most were lay, but religious and priests and all our Bishops also took part. We spent four days listening and talking, worshipping and socialising, and eventually we agreed hundreds of recommendations for action within the Church and in its relationship with the world.

But like soldiers back from the First World War, when we returned we found it hard to explain why the Congress had so affected us and what it had really been like. For the normal structures of the Church had seemed suspended and the usual communication barriers overcome. Fleeting, the Church had appeared a real community in which we all could play a part.

Imagine our disappointment, then, when our painfully prepared ideas and recommendations were never properly published or distributed. Eventually,

just the Bishop's reply was made definite. Essentially the Congress had sought to change the Church — were we simply naive to think it ever would?

When Fr. Bernard Sparks left the parish in 1974 he had served as curate under four of St. Catherine's five parish priests and for the year 1971/2 he was the parish representative and President of the Didsbury Council of Churches. His successor was Fr. Aidan O'Reilly who rapidly became a fervent supporter of St. Catherine's football teams. He was followed by Fr. Michael Kennelly S.J. whose Order sent him from New Orleans, U.S.A. to help relieve the acute shortage of priests in the Salford Diocese. This warm and compassionate man made many friends at St. Catherine's before he was recalled to the United States to take charge of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Tampa, Florida.

The scarcity of priests in the Diocese was seen when the next curate Fr. Myles Shean became a parish priest after a year at St. Catherine's and given the news that he would not have a curate.

It was three years later when Fr. John Mackie was moved from St. Catherine's to Burnley that Fr. Fay learned that his assistant was now to be on a part-time basis. This was Fr. Martin Saunders, a member of the Bishop's staff whom so many at St. Catherine's remembered spending a short time with the parish as a Deacon. It was Fr. Saunders who initiated the successful Youth Clubs which continue to exist today.

Now more than ever the value of the Lay Ministers of the Eucharist could be seen. These men and women commissioned to distribute the Eucharist in Holy Communion both during Mass and to the sick or housebound made their appearance in 1978. The first group of St. Catherine's parishioners began their eight week training sessions at the beginning of October. They were commissioned by Bishop Holland at Salford Cathedral on December 10, 1978, and were on duty at the Masses on December 17.

Papal Visit to Manchester

The Ministers of the Eucharist were to be much in evidence during the Papal Mass in Manchester in 1982 but it was not until 1980 that the first whispers of the impending visit to the U.K. of His Holiness Pope John Paul II began to circulate.

In September 1981, the Lord Mayor of Manchester and the Lady Mayoress, Councillor and Mrs. Hugh Lee paid a formal visit to their own parish of St. Catherine's by attending the Evening Mass. Fr. Fay was the Lord Mayor's Chaplain during his year of office.

Earlier in the year the Papal visit had been agreed in principal for the spring or summer of 1982 but all planning had to go ahead on a hypothetical note. In Manchester, Heaton Park was the chosen venue, it was to be transformed into a vast open-air cathedral.

Shortly after his visit to St. Catherine's, the Lord Mayor and some of his family went to Rome to stay as guests of the English College. During an audience with the Holy Father, Councillor Hugh Lee followed the example of his predecessor as Lord Mayor, Councillor Winnie Smith, by personally inviting the Holy Father to include Manchester in his itinerary.

The Royal Wedding on July 29 was however, the event of 1981. On behalf of St. Catherine's Mrs. Madeline Drake was asked to compose a telegram of congratulations and good wishes which was sent to HRH Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer and a Mass for their happiness and strength was celebrated.

With 1982 and the increasing excitement for the coming Papal visit came the cold fact that it had to be paid for. The Salford Diocese decided to raise its share by giving each parish a target figure, St. Catherine's was £5,000 by May if possible.

Church, Civic Authorities, Public Services and people combining twelve separate committees, together with a coordinating committee were responsible for the organisation and planning for the Manchester visit. Bishop Holland's Secretary, Monsignor John Allen chaired the coordinating committee and served on each of the other committees, he also directed operations at the Papal Visit Office which was set up at Cathedral House, Salford. Here St. Catherine's had two representatives, a great friend of the parish Rev. Fr. Gerard Meath O.P. who chaired the Media Committee and headed the Press Section of the office and the writer who was one of two professional journalists from Manchester published newspapers helping Fr. Gerard.

St. Catherine's Parish Council met regularly to consider not only ways and means of raising money to meet the target but also trying to ensure that as many parishioners as possible would be able to be in Heaton Park on the day.

Neither the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul nor the Falklands crisis succeeded in preventing the historic visit on Spring Bank Holiday Monday, May 31, 1982. The Holy Father arrived in Heaton Park to a roar of welcome from some 250,000 people and these words of welcome from Bishop Thomas Holland: "Holy Father, it's good you've come. Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord."

No one who was present in Heaton Park that day will ever forget what was both a physical and spiritual experience of a lifetime.

St. Catherine's was again represented at Heaton Park on May 31, 1983, among a crowd of some 200 plus people who watched Bishop Holland unveil

the huge granite boulder commemorating the Papal Visit just one year before. The 16½ ton block of pink Shap granite came from Penrith, Cumbria, and marks the exact site of the Altar used by Pope John Paul II.

The following month Bishop Holland celebrated his 75th birthday and his priestly Golden Jubilee. He also announced that he had offered his resignation to the Holy Father. He had been Bishop of Salford since 1964 when he was transferred from Portsmouth, "Swapping (as he said) the Solent for the Ship Canal". He remained in charge of the diocese as Apostolic Administrator until the appointment of the new Bishop.

It was not until March 1984 that Bishop Holland's successor was named. He was Monsignor Patrick Kelly, Rector of Oscott College, Birmingham. On his ordination as ninth Bishop of Salford at St. John's Cathedral, Salford, on April 3, 1984, at the age of 46 he became the youngest Bishop of the diocese since Bishop Herbert Vaughan was appointed second Bishop in 1872 when he was aged 40.

A concelebrated Mass at St. Catherine's on the evening of July 25, 1983, marked the 40th anniversary of Fr. Fay's ordination as priest. It was followed by a social and buffet in the Community Centre when a presentation was made to Fr. Fay.

There was a less pleasant experience for him in February 1985. One Thursday night Mr. O'Malley of Kinburn Road, was driving his taxi along School Lane. As he passed St. Catherine's Presbytery he saw flames leaping from the garage. Stopping he gave the alarm rousing the sleeping household and enabling Fr. Saunders to remove his car parked near the garage to safety. Simultaneous with the arrival of the Fire Brigade the garage, with Fr. Fay's new car inside, exploded. The Brigade were able to stop the fire spreading to the house but garage and car were both a total loss.

Bishop Kelly made his first visit to St. Catherine's in February 1986 with a busy programme which included visits, Confirmations and a special Mass for the Sick on Saturday afternoon and a meeting with the people of the parish at a noon lunch in the Community Centre on Sunday. The following month Fr. Fay announced that he had accepted a move to a smaller parish and would be taking over from a former parish priest of St. Catherine's, Fr. Denis Sheeran, at St. Gilbert's, Brookhouse, Eccles in June. Fr. Sheeran then aged 77 was retiring to live in Nazareth House, Prestwich.

On June 8, 1986 there was a Mass of Thanksgiving and remembrance for Fr. Fay's 15 years at St. Catherine's

It was followed by a social and a series of presentations to Fr. Fay in the Community Centre. Miss Mary Murphy his housekeeper of many years also received a presentation as she was going with Fr. Fay to his new parish.

Anticipating the possibility that the next Parish Priest may find himself without assistance Fr. Fay appealed for more Ministers of the Eucharist when the old practice of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds was revived on the wishes of the Bishops. A practice it was emphasised was to be encouraged but not regarded as compulsory.



A busy scene as Fr. John Fay and Tom White distribute First Communion certificates.

Within a few weeks of Fr. Fay's departure, Fr. Martin Saunders was transferred to St. Sebastian's, Pendleton, a move which he announced with his customary 'dead-pan' humour as being good news and bad news. "The good being that I am being moved to another parish, the bad that it will be a few weeks yet." Fr. Martin will be remembered with gratitude for his devoted work in setting up the youth clubs into their present system.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Celebration and Renewal

It is now over eighteen months since Fr. David McGarry took over as Parish Priest at St. Catherine's transferring from St. Vincent's, Openshaw, where he had been since 1982.

A Manchester man and a former pupil of Fr. Fay's at St. Bede's College, he studied at the English College in Rome for seven years and was ordained priest in Rome by Cardinal Heard on October 27, 1963. Which means that the parish now has two joyful Jubilees to celebrate — Diamond for the Parish, Silver for Father David.

St. Catherine's also has the part time services of Fr. Michael Kujacz whose full time job is Diocesan Director of the Overseas Mission of the Church. During their comparatively short time in Didsbury these two enthusiastic priests have given St. Catherine's a new sparkle in both appearance and worship.

As this is written the church is being completely redecorated inside. The Lady Chapel has already been restored and is again used for occasional Masses, although the layout has still to be finalised. The Crucifix, repainted and repaired, is back on the wall behind the Altar. Screens and organ pipes have gone and the original Sanctuary is being restored to its former simple beauty but adapted for present Liturgy. Holy Week '87 brought a touching example of the parish really acting as a family. It is a tale of a "churchmouse" one of those quiet self-effacing folk who regularly attend Mass but mix but rarely. This particular lady seemed to have no relations and when she died Father asked that those who could come to her requiem. On the Wednesday morning of her funeral the church was almost full to capacity, there were flowers and Mass offerings. Her name was Mary Roberts and as Father put it "Mary was given a wonderful 'send-off' to the Lord by the Parish Family.

Sixty years is not a long time in the two thousand or so years history of the Church but long enough for St. Catherine's to have experienced major changes in both the language of the Mass and in the Liturgy. Now as the Jubilee approaches the parish is playing its part in a new programme for the Sacraments of Initiation announced by Bishop Kelly in a pastoral letter dated July 26, 1987.

Under this the children of the diocese will be Confirmed before making their First Confession and First Holy Communion. Confirmation will be on the Feast of Pentecost, the First Confession in Advent and the First Communion at Easter.

In his newsletter of 19/20 September 1987 Father says: "Soon we will be celebrating our 60th Birthday. It is a time for gathering together in prayer and in Celebration of our Faith and Parish Family Story. We give thanks for the many Blessings that have come our way in the past; we place the present into God's hands, and we look with hope to the future, confident of God's continued presence with us in our journey.

It is time for difference to be put aside, for working together for making new friends and renewing old friendships. It is a time when we build on the foundations that have been laid by those who have gone before us."

It was decided that this Jubilee Year should run through from January 1, 1988, reaching its peak in the foundation month of October.

At 11.30 a.m. on the morning of New Year's Day some two hundred parishioners attended Solemn Mass concelebrated by Father David and Father Michael to launch the Jubilee celebrations.

Early arrivals discovered that Tom Webster and Elizabeth Perry with a group of enthusiastic children blowing up yellow and white balloons and packing them into a large net. Just before Mass began these were taken outside and released in a cloud into the leaden sky. "Disappearing", said Father Michael "in the general direction of Maine Road." One or two found their way into church settling against the ceiling. Jubilee Year had begun.

When forty years hence as the Parish approaches its Centenary perhaps another hand will write the next chapter in this story of St. Catherine's.



St. Catherine's Scouts September 14, 1934. Back Row: Seconds J. Davies, N. West, D. Green. Sitting: PL. D. Egan, ASM. W. Torkington, GSM. J. H. Chaloner, PL. H. Devon, Sec. C. Curry. In front: Scouts J. Regan, F. Richardson, K. Kelleher, J. Richardson.

APPENDICES

1 — St. Catherine of Siena. A Brief Biography

When she was about twenty the townspeople of Siena derisively called her "The Queen of Fontebranda", when she was only a few years older they held her in great respect and long before the centenary of her death she was the city's principal saint. She was Catherine Benincasa or as she is known today, St. Catherine of Siena, Patron of this parish.

Catherine was born about the year 1347, the youngest of a very large family. Her father was a prosperous wool-dyer, who in addition to his large house and workshops at Fontebranda owned a farm and vineyard outside the city of Siena.

It is said that Catherine was a pretty girl with golden-brown hair and in every way a normal happy child. With adolescence she developed a love of solitude and prayer, she resisted all the attempts to interest her in finding a husband and at sixteen she joined the Third Order of Dominicans in Siena.

For the next three years she lived a self imposed religious life in her own room in the family home leaving it only to attend Mass or to receive the Sacraments. Then she began to work as a volunteer in the city's hospitals. Recognising her extraordinary gift of sympathy and her ability to delve direct to the core of any problem many troubled people claimed much of her time and help. Catherine then began to gather round her a band of followers, mostly young men and women and when her home became their regular meeting place, she was dubbed Queen of Fontebranda. The townspeople neither understood nor approved of this young woman who, though wearing the habit of a Dominican tertiary, still lived at home and even entertained a motley band of young men from the best families in the city. In fact her group included an artist, a politician, an elderly priest or two, monks and young novices, all anxious to listen, learn from and share Catherine's Christian way of life. The townsfolk had a name for them too, the Caterinati. They called themselves the Bella Briqata and ignored the jeers and catcalls. Ecclesiastical history later gave the group a title, the School of Mystics. It was with the help of some of her group that Catherine, who never learned to write, was able to dictate the many hundreds of letters and the books for which she has become so well known.

She conducted her correspondence with Cardinals, princes and assorted rulers and dignitaries, and such was the degree of respect she commanded by her personal holiness and obvious love of Our Lord that she was listened to and her advice often acted upon.

Catherine played a significant role in persuading Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome from Avignon and so end the so-called Babylonish Captivity. After the death of Pope Gregory she gave her support to Pope Urban in Rome

during the Great Schism, when a rival Pope was set up in Avignon. Her support for Pope Urban did not however prevent her from urging him by frequent letters to moderate his harshness. Urban summoned her to Rome to be his adviser where she remained until her death on April 30th, 1380.

Catherine was canonized in 1461 and in modern times has been declared a Doctor of the Church. Her Feast Day is April 29th, and her emblem is the Lily.

This parish is dedicated to St. Catherine of Siena because of the devotion Canon Rowntree of St. Cuthbert's, Withington, had for her and he was the man who had the foresight to see to it that there was land available for this parish to develop.

2 – The Mothers

Mothers are rarely given to self-praise or to blowing their own trumpet as every man knows, but it would do them an injustice to produce a book about the parish of St. Catherine and leave out mention of the Union of Catholic Mothers.

Mrs. Edna Sadler, President of the St. Catherine's Branch of "The Mothers" was asked to sum up the activities of this remarkable organisation.

She writes:

A national organisation for Catholic married women of all ages. St. Catherine's branch of the Union of Catholic Mothers was founded in 1931 by Mrs. Katie Williams.

In the early days, many events such as coffee mornings, mile of pennies, fairs, etc. were organised by the branch to raise funds for the building of the church.

For many years they continued to organise the Christmas Fair with the help of the SVP. The money raised helped pay for the church and when that debt was settled they continued with the Fairs and the money sent to various charities. These included: Mother Theresa, the Morning Star Hostel, The Poor Clares and a desperately poor parish in Wales.

More recently the Fairs became general parish participation events although of course "The Mothers" still have their stall. Another annual UCM event was the Over 60's Party.

Educational talks, factory visits, and social occasions are part of our activities and members are encouraged to attend Area Benedictions, Retreats and visits to Walsingham. Many members have formed life-long friendships though the UCM and we would like to extend a warm welcome to any ladies who would like to join us. We meet on Wednesday evenings at 8 p.m. in the Community Centre.

EDNA SADLER

3 – The Scouts

The wide brimmed hat has given way to a green beret, long trousers have replaced the shorts, but the name has been abbreviated. They are called Scouts these days, not Boy Scouts as they were when Robert Baden-Powell founded his international youth movement in 1908.

The movement is still in being and part of it is the St. Catherine's Group which was formed in 1932 and has an unbroken record ever since. A much prized possession of the Group is the Log Book of the first four years. In mostly handwritten reports Group Scoutmaster John Herbert Chaloner, various Assistant Scoutmasters, Troop and Patrol Leaders, have recorded a multitude of activities. Bulging with souvenirs it contains photographs, some now faded, many as clear today as the day they were pasted in, Troop and Camp orders, press cuttings, posters, tickets and programmes — like the one for the Display and Concert by Scouts and Cubs in the Hall of St. Catherine's, Didsbury, on Saturday, January 14th, 1933. Tickets 6d (2½p). Scouts and Guides in uniform half-price. In small print beneath the date line the audience were informed: "Stage loaned by kind permission of St. Catherine's Players."

Clearly the St. Catherine's Own Didsbury Group, 2/241st Manchester Scouts, had been busy in the two months or so since its inauguration on November 16, 1932. At this meeting a report of which begins the Log Book, it was decided that the uniform of St. Catherine's Scouts should be navy blue shirts and shorts, worn with black stockings having two white banded tops. Their scarves were to be in Papal colours and bear the St. Catherine badge — the Arms of the City of Siena.

Mr. J. H. Chaloner was the first Scoutmaster with Miss M. Gibbons as Cubmaster. The following week Alfred Conroy was appointed the first Patrol Leader of the newly formed Peewit Patrol. At the second meeting in December Mr. William Torkington joined the Troop as acting Assistant Scoutmaster.

Now more than half a century later the Log provides both an accurate record of the first years of the Scout Troop and faithful picture of a way of

life through the eyes and often in the exact words of Catholic boys and young men in the Didsbury of the early Thirties.

It tells of playing Kim's Game and of learning the intricacies of knot tying, of lighting fires for outdoor cooking, of the art of passing messages by word of mouth — often with surprising results — and of watching semaphore demonstrations by more experienced Scouts from other Troops. Of week-end camps and Flag Raiding in Tatton Park and of the Troop's first ever long trek. This was to Lyme Park with members of the 1st Withington Troop and was written by the Patrol Leader of St. Catherine's Bulldog Patrol; "... after walking for about 15 minutes through the snow which was about one foot deep some of the smaller boys began to lag behind ..." the scouts found the main gate locked and had to slog a further half-mile before getting in. "... the snow was now even deeper but we continued our walking for about an hour during which we saw young stags ... finally arriving at the house where tea was waiting." Patrol Leader Hugh Devon concludes his report "... although very wet and tired we arrived home after what was to some of us a unique experience."

Reminded of this more than fifty years later Hugh Devon commented "Unique it most certainly was. I remember having to carry one of the lads at the very end he was exhausted."

On July 22, 1933 the Troop held its first garden party in the St. Catherine's School Grounds, Parrs Wood Road. The Holy Name Troop sent their Sword Dancing display team and the 1st Withington their Travelling Circus. A Military Band was provided by musicians of the 2/150 Manchester Scouts.

St. Catherine's built a Helter Skelter on to the veranda of the school with considerable success.

The following month saw a party of St. Catherine's Scouts in the Salford Diocesan Pilgrimage to Rome (August 24—30, 1933). John Challoner's entry in the log recalls "Fr. Mann very kindly took our St. Catherine's party to the Church of the Minerva, and we each received Holy Communion at the altar close to the body of St. Catherine of Siena." From G.S.M. Chaloner's entry we know the members of his party were Patrol Leaders Dermot Egan and Alan Duncan and Seconds J. Burns and D. Green.

Before the end of the year G.S.M. Chaloner and his boys had developed their own special display team, the Tumbling and Acrobatic team which seems to have made its debut on December 16, 1933, as part of a Troop Concert. The Scout magazine classed it as a "notable item" in their write-up. By February 13, 1934, the Tumblers were top of the bill at the St. Catherine's Shrove Tuesday Dance and Entertainment.

Soon the Tumbling Team was in demand for Garden Parties, Fetes, Concerts, as well as Scouting Displays and other events.

Two Silver Jubilees were celebrated in 1935, that of King George V and Queen Mary and that of the South Eastern Division of the Manchester Boy Scouts Association. There were camps and Jamborees, including the first Catholic Scouts Jamboree at Shrigley Park, near Macclesfield, home of the Salesian College and a favourite camping spot for St. Catherine's Scouts. This was preceded in May by a week of Scouting Activities at the District Jamboree at Parrswood House Grounds, East Didsbury.

Billed as Manchester's Greatest Scout Show, a Mass Historical Pageant was produced at the M.A.C. Ground, Fallowfield on September 28, 1935. Some 5,000 took part including St. Catherine's Troop. The Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell attended and writing in a magazine soon after declared that it was the best pageant he had ever seen.

The Log draws to an end with the report of the Troop's camp at the West Country Jamboree at Plymouth in August 1936, and of meetings with fellow Scouts from France, Sweden and Norway and of "... lunch on the aircraft carrier HMS Furious" and a visit to another carrier HMS Eagle and the submarine H27. "... After tea in Furious we came back to camp, had supper and got into bed." wrote young Myers of the Hawks Patrol.

On the fly-leaf of the Log is a note in red ink written and signed by the Chief Scout Lord Baden-Powell: "This is a very complete and interesting Log, and a history of good work by the Group. May it inspire the successors of these Scouts to carry on the good name of the Group. 11 Sept., '36."

By 1938 William (Bill) Torkington was Scoutmaster with Hugh Devon as ASM. But in the Summer of 1939 when ASM Devon, who was also a soldier in the Territorial Army went off to his annual camp he was not to rejoin civilian life until he was demobbed some years later. Gradually all the adult leaders enlisted or were called up for war service and for a time it was Patrol Leader Laurie Pickup who held the St. Catherine's Troop together.

They, like Scouts throughout the Country proved a gift to the Civil Defence organisation by providing a ready trained, reliable and self-disciplined messenger service. Their bravery during air-raids became a byword.

With peace and demob Bill Torkington became Group SM and Hugh Devon Scoutmaster whose only change of title until his retirement in 1978 was to be known as Scout Leader from 1966. This was when the Association made a number of far reaching changes to bring the movement 'up-to date'.

Hugh Devon sums the post war period: "We were never a big Troop, always around 18 or 20 more or less. Continuity of training and activities was the key. If we had a lad for six months he was in for life. There were only a few Catholic Scout Groups and we had lads from Rusholme, MossSide, Levenshulme, Heaton Mersey, one family of three came regularly from Buxton.

At the World Jamboree at Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, in 1957 St. Catherine's was represented by seven Queen's Scouts.

The Troop struck a bad patch in 1980 when the number fell to just two Scouts. At this time Mr. Walter Gallagher took over as Scout Leader. Over the next two years numbers increased and by the time the Scouts of the North West were invited to play a part in the welcome for Pope John Paul II on his historic visit to Manchester in June 1982, Scout Leader Walter Gallagher was able to take his 26 strong Troop to help line the Holy Father's route from the helicopter landing in the grounds of Nazareth House to Heaton Park for the Papal Mass.

Another highlight of that year for St. Catherine's Scouts was the County Rally to meet the new Chief Scout, Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh at Linnet Clough, Mellor.

Four years later Walter Gallagher, who is now Assistant District Commissioner to the Scouts, handed over St. Catherine's Troop to a new Scout Leader, David Dwyer.

Scouts of the eighties are understandably a more sophisticated bunch of boys than those of fifty-plus years ago. While retaining its basic aim — to aid and encourage the boys mental, physical and spiritual development — Scouting has changed to meet this challenge. As David Dwyer explained, his function is not to give orders but to help and advise. The Patrol system is used to the full. The boys discussing with their Patrol Leader what they want to do, working out a viable plan of action and then putting it into practice with the help and advice of the adult Scout Leader. An important part of this role is to see that needless risks are not taken and health and safety factors are considered most carefully.

Camping is still a popular choice and ranges from a Troop weekend to a multi-Troop Camporee like the one at Heaton Park in 1986.

St. Catherine's Summer Camp that year was held near Bodmin, Cornwall as a joint venture with the 89th Withington, 2/240 Deepdale and 2/77 Whalley Range Troops. Some 47 lads in all. Says David Dwyer "Despite the weather which included sunny spells, gales and heavy rain, everyone enjoyed themselves. There was plenty to do, abseiling, walking, canoeing and sight-seeing. And an added bonus as the lads learned how to live and work with other Scouts from different Troops."

But he is most proud of his boys for a recent (September 1987) weekend camp entirely on their own at Linnet Clough, Mellor. As he said "all I did was take their gear down the day before they went. I must admit I had two near sleepless nights but I need not have worried. They did very well."

Certainly their shopping list for food reads like every schoolboy's dream: Bread, Bacon, Cornflakes, Cheese Spread, Beefburgers and Hot Dogs. One loaf and six pints of milk between the six of them. One anxious mother took a basket of extra food down to them but was politely told to take it home again, this was their camp!

Scouting it seems, has not really changed all that much, just grown up with the times. That said it does face the most stern competition from other activity groups, Youth, Athletic and Gymnastic clubs, some of which would demand all their members spare time. But its greatest problem is the shortage of adult Scout Leaders and the right men are always welcome.

Numbers in the troop vary says David sometimes he has over 20 but at the time of writing the number is 12. Two patrols the Eagles and the Owls.

As ever one valuable source of new Scouts is home grown — the Cubs. The St. Catherine's Pack, formed at the same time as the Scouts, is headed to-day by their Akela, Mrs. Lilian Nicholson. She speaks with great enthusiasm about her Pack of 28 youngsters, all between the ages of eight and ten-and-a-half, who meet each Monday from 6.30 to 8 p.m.

Former Cubs from the early days would find that like the Scouts, the basics are unchanged but some things are no more. Gone is the DIB DIB DOB DOB of the old Cub Howl, today's version is a somewhat more dignified and a shade quieter. There are still the Sixers and the accent is still on activities and games that will lead the boys gradually into Scouting. They work for proficiency badges and now also for the Bronze, Silver and Golden Arrow awards. One popular activity is the conducted tour around exciting places like the most recent, a visit to the Fire Department at Manchester Airport.

Akela Lilian Nicholson's policy is to encourage all her Cubs to reach the standard to join the Scouts when they are old enough though not all will join the St. Catherine's Troop or even stay the course, but many will and do.

4 — "The Rescue"

The Rescue Sisters and the Rescue Society had been established at Didsbury Lodge for three years by the time St. Catherine's parish was founded in 1928 by Fr. Charles Wilkin. An association between society and parish was formed then and has continued ever since.

The Salford Catholic Children's Rescue and Protection Society was founded by Cardinal Herbert Vaughan in 1886 when he was the second Bishop of Salford, and it was he who enlisted the help of the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph, the "Rescue Sisters", whom he had also helped to found, to run and care for the children.

These children were the destitute, the poorest young and helpless, not only in need of physical care but in serious danger of losing the Faith. The first Home opened was Ardwick Hall where according to the first issue of the Society's magazine *The Harvest* published in October 1887, 160 children were in residential care.

Early in the life of the Society emigration to Canada was practised as a way of finding Catholic homes and a start in life for some of the children. On four occasions between 1889 and 1893 some 77 children crossed the Atlantic accompanied by two Sisters on each trip. During the 1914-18 War there were many 'old boys' among the Canadian troops who came to England on their way to the war zone and who called to see once again the Sisters who had looked after them.

The second Home was at Patricroft first in existing buildings on land given by Canon Kershaw of Bolton and later in a purpose built block. Eventually 150 children were housed and cared for. By 1918 St. Gerard's Home in Moss Side had become the headquarters of the Society with Fr. Maspero as the first Priest-Secretary.

To cope with the ever-increasing demand Bishop Casartelli bought Didsbury Lodge in 1924 and placed it under the protection of Our Lady of Lourdes. Sadly the Bishop died a few weeks before the new Home opened but his successor, Bishop Henshaw, gladly and with enthusiasm took over the cause.

Didsbury Lodge served as an emergency hospital during the Second World War, the children and Sisters being evacuated, the Order supplying trained Sisters to form the nursing staff. The Home reverted to its normal role with the coming of peace, but the day of the large 'institutional' type of Home was fading.

Adoption has been successfully encouraged, as has fostering, and the Society is a recognised Boarding Out Dept.

In 1957 the main block at Didsbury was sold to the Central Electricity Board and the present convent, nursery and offices built on the ground retained. Today there are houses not only in the area but in various parts of the diocese where the children live in 'family' groups with a Sister 'Mother' and the work of the Society has widened to include moral welfare and care. Didsbury remains the Headquarters and heart of the 'Rescue' with St. Catherine's as its parish church.

Parish Priests of St. Catherine of Siena, Didsbury

Fr. Charles Wilkin	1928-1957	Died December 7, 1957
Fr. Denis Sheeran	1957-1968	
Fr. Donatus Burke	September-December 1968	
Fr. Bernard Franks	1968-1970	Died September 3, 1970
Fr. John Fay	1970-1986	
Fr. David McGarry	1986-	

Curates and Assistant Priests

Fr. Walter Dempsey	1946-1950
Fr. Denis Sheeran	1950-1954
Fr. John Henderson	1954-1958
Fr. Francis Brown	1958-1966
Fr. Bernard Sparks	1966-1974
Fr. Aidan O'Reilly	1974-1977
Fr. Michael Kennelly, S.J.	1977-1980
Fr. Myles Sheahan	1980-1981
Fr. John Mackie	1981-1984
Fr. Martin Saunders	1984-1986
Fr. Michael Kujacz	1986-

Also served as Assistant Priests for brief periods

Fr. John Guerin	1958
Fr. Michael Collins	1966
Fr. Donal Daly	1968
Fr. Patrick Crowley	1971
Fr. Thomas Murphy	1979
Fr. Anthony Ingham	1980

Priestly Vocations

The following are among those parishioners of St. Catherine's who entered the Priesthood. Not all were ordained at St. Catherine's.

Name	Date of Ordination
Fr. Vincent Sweeney	July 29, 1945
Fr. J. Ronald Jeffers	July 15, 1956
Fr. Samuel Torkington OFM	September 20, 1958
Fr. Bernard Bradbury (Mill Hill Missionary)	July 10, 1960
Fr. Patrick Tansey	June 6, 1962
Fr. Joseph Sweeney	February 2, 1964
Fr. D. Torkington OFM	March 14, 1964
Fr. Patrick McKeown	June 4, 1966
Fr. John Hovington (For Shrewsbury Diocese)	April 4, 1975
Fr. Peter Moore (Marist Fathers)	April 10, 1976
Fr. David Quiligotti	January 1, 1981

Acknowledgements

This little book is published as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of our parish of St. Catherine of Siena. Its preparation has involved me in well over a year of enjoyable if sometimes frustrating research. There have been blind alleys and more than one disappointment but there have also been many pleasurable meetings and talks with fellow parishioners of all age groups and many new friends made. From all of them I have learned something to help the story along and to each one of them I am deeply grateful. Between them they have helped me with facts and photographs, memorabilia and personal memories.

My sincere thanks go also to Father David for his encouragement, to Father Michael for his patience, his time, his help and advice, to Mr. Fred Johnston for his very practical help and very specially to Mrs. Eileen Harrison for spending her time in the school holidays typing the final version of the text.

Finally I am indebted to my friend and former colleague David Chesworth for designing the cover for this book and for creating the Logo for St. Catherine's Jubilee.

O.F.