

***A History of the Catholic Parish of Saint Augustine of Canterbury, in Matson.***

***Text from a Publication to Commemorate the Dedication of the Church on May 27th, 1988.***

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## **1. Acknowledgements**

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Rev. J. A. Harding – Diocesan Archivist.

Those who read through the proofs.

The Publishers.

## **2. Greetings from the Bishop**

I am happy to have this opportunity to send greetings to St. Augustine's Parish in Matson. As the name implies, a Silver Jubilee is a precious occasion, a special opportunity to express our gratitude to the Lord. As the Psalm says, 'Unless the Lord build the house, in vain do its builders labour.' Surely this is specially true of a church, a house of God. We thank God for the many ways in which He has blessed this church and this parish.

God works through people and so we also remember with gratitude all who have played a part in the original project and in the equally important work of building up a parish community of St. Augustine's. This is a labour of love in every sense of the word and we salute those who have been prominent in parish life and also those who have quietly busied themselves with the ordinary, but essential, tasks. We think of all who have shared in the 'one thing necessary', the prayer life of the parish.

A parish is called to worship, to work and, one might add, to welcome. As the Lord welcomes us to His house, so we are to welcome Him into our hearts and in His name to welcome others. Our parishes are certainly growing in the welcome given to newcomers and visitors. I always like that phrase of St. Paul's, 'Giving the stranger a loving welcome.'

Warm congratulations to Father Eddie and all the parishioners on the Silver Jubilee of St. Augustine's.

† Mervyn

Bishop of Clifton

### **3. “Coming and Going”**

This past ‘year’, bridging 1987/88, has been and continues to be a special time for us. Indeed, it is a very special year for several other important celebrations: the Marian Year, proclaimed by our Pope John Paul II, to honour Our Lady and ask her prayers as we prepare to enter the third Millennium of Christian Faith in the year 2000, the Millennium of Christianity among the Ukrainian and Russian people, the sixth Centenary of the Faith among the Lithuanian people, the Tercentenary of the Western District, the former area including our present Diocese today, which was one of the four Catholic Districts in England and Wales administered by a Bishop (the Vicar Apostolic) set up in 1688 by Pope Innocent XI after the Reformation, the 250th anniversary in honour of John Wesley, the Year of the Diocesan Synod – the pastoral gathering of the ordained and laity of the Diocese with our Bishop, the Year of the Anglican Lambeth Convocation, the 150th anniversary of Oscott College Seminary, where many of our students for the Diocesan priesthood train. Last, but not least, the bi-centenary anniversary of Australia, (not forgetting our Australian author!). For us, the 27th May is the 25th anniversary date since the late Bishop Rudderham came to bless our then, new, parish church.

All these anniversaries are ‘turning points’. Jesus celebrated turning points and used them to lead people forward. He called people to ‘Come’ in order to ‘Go’ in His name and share what they had received.

Our Silver Jubilee is for us that Christ-given opportunity and challenge to our established and new parishioners together to ‘come’ in communion to, and with, Our Lord, and each other, in order that we may ‘go’ to further His work ‘in peace to love and serve the Lord’ by our loving one another, ‘so that the world may believe’.

In the comings and goings of Christ and His followers through the ages, what matters is that we try and persevere, not whether we succeed: only God can grant that. ‘The greatest failure is not to have failed, rather, it is not to have tried and not to have persevered’. May we all continue the work of God’s Kingdom in all we think, do and say as members of His family.

With love and prayers

Yours, because His,

Fr. Eddie

### **3.1     *Introduction***

This booklet was produced to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the building of the church of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Matson, and the Dedication of our church on May 27th, 1988.

The booklet consists of three sections: an historical background of Matson and Catholicism, the origin of St. Augustine's and finally, St. Augustine's as it is today.

New parishes do not appear overnight. The efforts and devotion began even before the start of our story. In the dark days of Penal Laws was sown the seed which is still bearing fruit today. Through those dark days run the slender links which bind us to pre-Reformation Gloucester.

Without the past, there would be no present. A study of history invariably leads us to a greater awareness of the present and perhaps to an idea of what may lay ahead. The reader is invited to look back and remember with gratitude the challenges, triumphs and foresight of those involved in the origin and development of our parish. The parish church gives identity and continuity to parish life. It links us with those who built the church and those generations to come who will kneel and pray where we kneel and pray.

VERONICA HOLLINGSBEE

AUGUSTINE'S SILVER JUBILEE

#### **4. Part One – Historical Background**

This section, which covers the period from 1066 to the late 18th century, is an account of Matson, its neighbouring churches, effects of the Reformation, local martyrs and, finally, the establishment of the Gloucester Mission.

Matson is pleasantly situated two miles east of Gloucester along the slopes of Robinswood Hill.

The name of Matson does not appear in the Domesday Book. However, the entry for Barton in the Hundred of Dudstone includes a reference to two freemen holding two hides (240 acres). These can be identified from later evidence as being the later Manor of Matson.

During the reign of Henry III, the name of the Manor was variously spelled as Mattesdune, Matesdon and Matesden. It is possible that Mattesdune is derived from 'matte' (a meadow) and 'dune' (a down).

Before the Norman Conquest, Gloucester was a centre for forging iron ore found at Robinswood Hill. The hill was not only important for its iron deposits, but also for its springs which supplied the city of Gloucester with water from mediaeval times up to the early 19th century.

Matson was a neighbouring parish to Gloucester, which became a city in 1483. There were eleven parish churches in mediaeval times, as well as a number of religious communities. These included the Dominicans or Blackfriars, the Franciscans or Greyfriars, the Carmelites or Whitefriars (who had a house on the site of the present bus station), the Augustinian Canons of St. Oswald's Priory and the Benedictines of St. Peter's (now the Cathedral). There were Augustinian Canons at Llanthony Priory, which was just outside the town walls.

There were also religious buildings in Matson's surrounding area. Prinknash Park was given to the Abbey of St. Peter in 1096 and held by the Abbey until the Dissolution. The Abbot built a chapel at Prinknash at the hunting lodge (now St. Peter's Grange) in the 14th century. In 1928 the house again became the home of the Benedictine Monks. The nearby churches of St. Leonard at Upton-St.-Leonards and St. Lawrence at Barnwood also belonged to St. Peter's Abbey.

Matson had its own parish church, dating back to mediaeval times. A church at Matson was granted to the Abbey of St. Peter between 1113-1130. The pre-Reformation building remained until 1730, when the nave was demolished and rebuilt. The chancel was also rebuilt and the church dedicated to St. Katharine in 1893. The original dedication is lost.

It is interesting to note that St. Augustine's stands on the site area of an ancient church. It is situated on the boundary of two fields, Moat Leaze and Chapel Hay – the latter adjacent to Painswick Road. The late Canon Bazeley, Rector of Matson from

1875-1923, believed that a church existed near the site of the present St. Augustine's. A chapel certainly existed at Matson in 1100 when the de Mattesdunes were lords of the manor. Their manor house and church stood in the field on the north side of Robinswood Hill, known as Moat Leaze. Excavations in 1953 in Moat Leaze revealed evidence of a mediaeval manor house and moat, along with pottery from the 12th or 13th century and Saxon loom weights.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-1538), when the majority of the monastic buildings was destroyed, would have had a major impact on life in Matson, along with the religious changes which gradually led to the creation of the Established church out of communion with Rome. The Mass was suppressed and finally abolished under Elizabeth I. The Dissolution, the rejection of papal supremacy and the suppression of Mass were severe blows to the Catholic faith.

Services in English and changes resulting from the Reformation were accepted by the majority of people in Gloucestershire. However, the survival of Catholicism was due to a number of families who did not accept Elizabeth's religious settlement and chose to cling to the old religion.

These families were able to offer hospitality and refuge in their homes, providing not only secret cupboards for safe concealment of sacred requisites but also hiding places for the priests when needed. These families were liable to fines for not attending Anglican services. Priests and those discovered helping them were subject to severe penalties.

Gloucestershire can proudly claim as a son the first Missionary priest to arrive in England from the college at Douai. Fr. Lewis Barlow was born in Gloucestershire and soon after his ordination, he volunteered to return to England, in 1574.

During Queen Elizabeth 1st's reign almost 200 priests and lay people were put to death. Gloucester has links with eight martyrs of this period, two of whom were priests who met their deaths in the city of Gloucester and one who has an association with Matson. Blessed John Pibush served at Gloucester in 1589 and four years later was arrested at Moreton-in-Marsh. On being charged with treason, he replied, 'If to be a priest is a traitor, then I am one. I thank God for it.' After a year, he was sent to Gloucester gaol. On 19th February, 1594, he either engineered or took advance of a mass break-out of twenty prisoners. He was recaptured the next day at Matson and was sent to London. Several years' confinement ruined his health. He was executed on 18th February, 1601 at Southwark.

During the 17th century the size of the local Catholic community steadily declined, probably as a result of the crippling fines and the lack of clergy. It was almost impossible for the few remaining Catholics to receive the Sacraments. In addition to a few families in Gloucester, the most prominent wealthy Catholic families included the Pouncefootes of Haresfield, the Comptons of Hartpury, the Jerninghams of Painswick, William Norwood of Leckhampton and the Theyers of Coopers Hill. These recusants would have sheltered clergy from time to time and Mass was no doubt held in their homes.

There was a brief revival of Catholicism under James II. When he came to Gloucester in the early part of his reign, he heard Mass in the chapel over the

Sheriff's court. He sent Fr. Pius Littleton (alias Westcote) and Brother Wilfred Reave OSB to Gloucester. But this brief, attempted restoration resulted in anti-Catholic reaction. New penal laws were enacted and previous laws enforced. Catholicism was forced underground once more. There is no record of 'papist' families in Matson in the recusant lists for 1715 and 1716.

Gloucester was not to have a resident priest until 1788. Prior to this, there were probably visits from the priest at Hartpury and from Jesuit priests at Worcester. We also know of another priest who visited Gloucester. In a letter dated February 8th, 1782, to Dr. Gregory Sharrock OSB (Vicar Apostolic of the Western District 1797-1809) Fr. Andrew Weetman of Perthyre gave details of Missions he served. 'Gloucester, which I serve on a weekday, is thirty miles from Perthyre. To Gloucester I go every Indulgence, and sometimes more often when a long interval between Indulgences.'

The 1773 returns of the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District (1763-97), Dr. Charles Walmsley, gave 210 Catholics in the whole of Gloucestershire, under five Mission priests. The second Catholic Relief Act became law in 1791 and Catholics were then able to practise their faith openly for the first time in more than two centuries.

Matson was part of the Gloucester Mission which started in 1787. The first resident priest in post-Reformation times, Fr. Gildart, came to Gloucester in 1788. During the 1790s, Fr. John Greenway had the first public Catholic chapel erected in London Road, which was dedicated to St. Peter. By 1813, the Catholic population in the city of Gloucester was 40. In 1859, the building of the present-day St. Peter's began. The church was completed and consecrated in 1868. The Gloucester religious census for 1851 gives one place of Catholic worship with 310 attending over the three Services. The few Catholics who might have lived in the Matson area would have been served by the priests of St. Peter's – in particular Canon Joseph Bernard Chard (rector from 1894-1934) and his successor Mgr. Matthew Roche, the founder of our own parish at Matson.

For many years after the Reformation Catholics practised their religion with great difficulties. The small, loyal congregations built up by the Seminary priests laid the foundations for a day they could not hope to see themselves – when the Catholic faith would flourish again in England.

## **5. Part Two – The Beginnings of St. Augustine’s Parish**

Gloucester’s population was expanding and the building of Matson commenced in 1946. The first Mass in Matson was celebrated six years later. Ten years after this and three Mass centres later, the building of St. Augustine’s began.

At this stage it is important to acknowledge our debt to the invaluable work of Mgr. Matthew Roche, Rector of St. Peter’s. Churchdown, Brockworth, Tuffley and Matson parishes, besides the three city Catholic schools, are largely the result of his endeavours. In 1983, at the beginning of his 50th year in Gloucester, he was forced to retire due to ill health.

The first Mass in Matson was arranged and celebrated by Mgr. Roche on December 21st, 1952 in the canteen of Laing’s (the builders of Matson) near Munsley Grove. The local Catholics who owned cars attended St. Peter’s, while those within walking distance attended Mass in the canteen. The Cunningham family, who lived nearby, held the canteen keys. They unlocked the canteen for the 10.45am Mass and arranged benches. After the workmen left at 1pm on Saturday, the floor of the canteen was washed to remove the heavy red soil deposited by the workmen’s boots. The congregation, numbering 50-60, sat on the workmen’s benches and knelt on newspapers, as the floor was damp. Trestle tables, used by the workmen for meals, formed the altar. An harmonium was played by Mr. Highnam. Eric Parsons acted as chauffeur for Mgr. Roche and also served at the altar. Fr. Matthew Hayes, the late Fr. Patrick Cronin (from St. Peter’s), Fr. Gerard Rogers and Fr. James McGuire (from Blaisdon) celebrated Mass here.

Fund-raising events were organised by St. Peter’s. These included coffee mornings, jumble sales and fêtes and bingo greatly helped to boost funds.

The canteen was used as a Mass centre for several months.

After the builders left in 1953, Mgr. Roche arranged for Mass to be celebrated in the community centre in Redwell Road. After the dances, which ended at twelve on Saturday nights, the hall was swept, toilets cleaned and chairs placed ready for the 10.45am Mass. Tables were used for the altar. A local Polish Catholic family laundered the altar linen. Fund-raising activities continued to be organised. Coffee evenings were held in the parishioners’ homes, where various items, such as flowers and vegetables, were brought and sold.

On January 2nd, 1959, a notice in the local press announced that the community centre would no longer be available for Mass. The City Council also stopped the use of the hall by other organisations, such as Toc H. The reason given was that the lettings were against the constitution of the community centre and had been made after a misunderstanding. Bookings had been taken to raise money to pay for the maintenance of the hall. It was also felt that organisations using the centre should have their own centres.

However, there was room at the inn – by courtesy of Mr. Storton and the Cheltenham Brewery, the skittle alley of the Musket was made available for Mass. As there was only concrete to kneel on, the ladies made kneelers which were hired out for a penny or whatever one could afford. By the time St. Augustine's was built, £19 had been collected by this means.

The Combined Funds campaign was introduced by Mgr. Roche on August 4th, 1960. The objective was to obtain fund offertory promises in excess of £36,000 over a three year period. All collections would be consolidated into the one Sunday offering. This involved collectors visiting every Catholic wage-earner in the parish. £20,000 for a new church to be built at Matson was one of the campaign goals. Eric Parsons and Tom Murphy (who was an altar server at the Musket Mass centre) collected in the Matson area on Sunday mornings.

For three and a half years, until September 1962, with the altar near the dartboard and the bar for a background, the Musket Inn became the last temporary Mass centre for the Matson Catholics.

*'How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord God of Hosts.'*  
Psalm 83

St. Augustine's was built to meet the needs of an ever-increasing population. The church site, an area of open ground, was purchased for £1,000 from the City Council on 19th January, 1960. Mgr. Roche commissioned architects Egbert and William Leah of Gloucester to design the church. The general contractors were Brennan Brothers of Gloucester.

The Foundation Stone, containing a copy of the plan, the Deed of Dedication, local newspapers, medals and coins was laid on 22nd February, 1962, by Mgr. Roche. Frs. Matthew Hayes and the late Patrick Cronin were also present. The cold, biting wind did not deter local Catholics from turning out in strength for the ceremony.

The total external length of the church is 92 feet, the width 41 feet and the height 35 feet. The church seats approximately 256. It consists of a nave, with a centre and side aisles, a deep Sanctuary, a side chapel and circular baptistery, now the Lady Shrine. An atrium, the full width of the building, is separated from the main body of the church by a clear glass screen. The purpose of this was to allow parents with restless children to retire there and continue to take some part in the service and leave the congregation free to concentrate without distraction. Above the entrance is a balcony with additional seating.

The main structure is in specially pre-cast white concrete and consists of seven pairs of portal frames with concrete purlins and beams. The portal which supports the stained glass window weighs seven tons! The main arch consists of crushed Portland stone and white cement. The erection of the portal frames and purlins was completed in four days. In the gable over the entrance are five narrow windows. The centre window is a magnificent stained glass panel, depicting St. Augustine of Canterbury. This was designed by Pierre Fourmaintroux of the Whitefriars studio.

The original electrical underfloor heating, with removable elements, proved to be unsatisfactory: even when switched on overnight prior to Mass, the heat provided was insufficient and earlier switching on was too expensive.

The main altar, composed of Portland stone, cost £230, which included the cost of installation. The original main altar top was found to be damaged. After trimming it was placed in the side chapel.

The tabernacle, in the Blessed Sacrament side chapel, was crafted by a parishioner of St. Peter's. The mahogany seats and sedilia were constructed by Herne and Company, Waterford, Ireland. The two altars, crucifix, font, lectern and cantor's desk were constructed by Boulton Brothers of Cheltenham.

A striking feature of the church is the life-sized crucifix in colour, for which the 'Crux decusata' was used instead of the usual form. This was inspired largely by the evidence of the Holy Shroud. The cross is of oak, roughened and polished. The figure of Christ was carved from limewood, by Patrick Conoley of Boulton Brothers (Cheltenham) and painted by a Birmingham firm.

The total cost, including furnishings, was £32,000. This was raised by the local Catholic population. Lack of finance meant that a hall and a priest's house could not be built at the time.

Mgr. Roche celebrated the first Mass in St. Augustine's on September 30th, 1962.

In the absence of Mgr. Joseph Rudderham (Bishop of Clifton Diocese from 1949-74), who was in Rome for the Second Vatican Council, (the gathering of all the Bishops of the Catholic Church), Mgr. Roche blessed the church on Thursday 4th December, 1962. Frs. Matthew Hayes, Tim Crowley and Christopher Lloyd (who, with Mgr. Roche, was responsible for Matson) also took part. Other priests present were Fr. Lawrence Walsh O'Carroll (Prior at Whitefriars Independent School in Cheltenham) and Fr. James McGuire (the then newly appointed Father Rector of Blaisdon Hall Salesian School, Longhope). Mass was celebrated after the Blessing.

Those attending St. Augustine's contributed toward the cost of altar linen, the altar Missal and stand, bell, holy water stoop and other requirements.

Bishop Rudderham celebrated Mass on May 28th, 1963 –then the feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury. The mayor, the late councillor Ben Cooke and Sheriff (Mr. J.E. Holohan) were present.

The first baptism took place on 4th August, 1974. The first wedding was on 28th November 1963.

From a humble workmen's hut, through a succession of varied Mass centres, sprang the foundation of our church and parish.

## **6. Part Three – St. Augustine’s Parish**

St. Augustine’s was created a parish in 1974. The next fourteen years saw a succession of five resident priests – during a time of change, new challenges, new ventures and, above all, progress, which continues.

For twelve years St. Augustine’s was an additional Mass centre served from St. Peter’s. On 15th June, 1974, Bishop Rudderham established St. Augustine’s as a parish and appointed Fr. Michael English as the first parish priest. A bungalow ideally situated near the church was purchased on May 17th, 1974, at a cost of £16,750, for use as the parish priest’s residence.

Up to 1974 there was only one weekly Mass at 10.45am on Sunday. Since the establishment as a parish, there has been a regular daily service, with Sunday Masses at 10.30am and 6pm. The church now served the areas of Matson, from Finlay Road, Coney Hill, the Heron estate, the village and surrounding areas of Upton-St.-Leonards. In 1973 there were about 150 regular worshippers. This number increased to over 300 by 1974, the year the weekly parish bulletin was started.

The social aspect of the parish included coffee evenings in the parishioners’ homes, visits to Clifton Cathedral, youth excursions to Downside 75 and a parish social at Saintbridge Sports Centre to coincide with the feast of St. Augustine, the patron saint of the church. Matson was supported as a poor Mission for two years.

On Sunday, 15th June, 1975, St. Augustine’s celebrated its first anniversary as a parish. A replica of the anniversary cake was made specifically to enable souvenir photographs to be taken.

The first summer fête was held at Robinswood Infants School on July 12th, 1975. Subsequent fêtes were held in a marquee where the hall car park is today. Having no hall, meetings were held the bungalow (resident parish priest’s home) or, if large numbers were present, in the church. Volunteers cleaned the church and arranged flowers. House Masses were held from time to time. During 1975 the main altar was re-positioned several feet towards the main body of the church. This was to enable to priest to celebrate Mass while facing the congregation.

Fr. Michael English was parish priest for three and a half years. In 1983, he was appointed to St. Peter’s, Gloucester, when Mgr. Roche retired and is at present Rector there.

Fr. John A. Supple was resident parish priest from 1977-78. He is currently parish priest of St. Gregory and the English Martyrs, Salisbury.

During the several months before the appointment of the next parish priest, Fr. Bruno Bradley (from Birmingham) celebrated Sunday Mass. The monks from Prinknash Abbey conducted services on feast days and Holy Days of Obligation.

The late Fr. Gerard Anthony Carroll, born 1920, studied at St. John's Seminary, Waterford and was ordained in 1944. He was parish priest from 1978-80.

Frs. Michael J. Fitzpatrick and Leo M. Porter (from St. Peter's) served Matson until the appointment in 1981 of Mgr. Donald McMillan. He was born in 1925 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, attended Oscott Seminary and was ordained for the Diocese of Clifton in 1948. The main development during his time at St. Augustine's was the construction of the parish hall. The function of the hall was to provide facilities for social and religious activities. The Building Committee consisted of those with practical experience, including a local electrician and bricklayer. Project Construction Limited, Bristol, designed and built the hall. Work began on September 7th, 1982 at a cost of £65,000. Part of the cost was met by loans and fund-raising by parishioners. In May, 1983, after celebrating Mass, Dr. Mervyn Alexander, Bishop of Clifton, opened and blessed the hall. This was followed by an informal reception in the hall.

The development of the hall enabled the Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Girl Guide organisations to be formed. Parish meetings, bazaars, dances and bingo continue to be held in the hall.

In April, 1985, Mgr. McMillan was succeeded by Fr. Eddie Peach, the 5th parish priest of St. Augustine of Canterbury and our present parish priest.

After training with the Canons Regular of the Lateran, at University College, Dublin and at Oscott Seminary, he was ordained on 24th June, 1972. His induction Mass was concelebrated on May 5th, 1985. Great support was received from fellow priests, fellow Christian clergy and parishioners on 'this most enjoyable and happy day'.

Shortly after, the first (and to date, only) ordination in our church took place. Parishioner Robert Rainbow was ordained on July 20th, 1985 by Bishop Mervyn. Robert trained at Oscott Seminary and is currently assistant priest at the Holy Family parish, Swindon.

As with any developing community, change is inevitable. Time has witnessed many changes, as, for example, the interior of our church. The tabernacle, originally on the main altar, is now in the Blessed Sacrament side chapel. While the main altar is the focus for Mass, with lectern, people and celebrant, the tabernacle becomes the focus for prayer with its own area. The chapel is also used for weekday Mass. The font is now situated to one side of the Sanctuary, while the former baptistery has become a permanent shrine to Our Lady. The new porch side entrance has resulted in a warmer church and greater access for display and notices. The double doors of the previous entrance can still be used and serve as a fire door. Additional lighting has been installed to enhance the Sanctuary, in particular the main altar, the lectern, the 'chair of Christ' (for the celebrant), as it is properly termed. A now familiar part of our Eastertide decorations is the 11' square icon – a painting of the risen Christ on hessian canvas – the work of Sr. Regina of Turvey Abbey. Although several weeks were spent designing the picture, the final drawing and painting took three days: the latter undertaken on scaffolding and Sr. Regina well into pensionable age.

Our parish today, bounded by our fellow parishes of St. Peter's, Brockworth, Stroud and Tuffley, contains an ever-increasing number of parishioners: about 360 coming together for Sunday Mass.

As members of the body of Christ we are one family, called to be disciples of the Lord and to continue his mission to the world. Our Lord Himself said, 'That they may be one, so the world may believe'. Therefore, ours is not merely an individual task; it is something to share with the rest of the church. We live out this task as a community, a family. The word 'family' comes from the Latin word for 'servant'. Christ said that He 'came to serve, not to be served'. As His followers, we too must serve the other members of our faith family by using the talents and abilities given to us. Put another way, the priest and people in the parish form an 'orchestra': the priest is the conductor, the people each play their own instruments, but together all are meant to be 'in harmony' to produce the 'symphony' of praise through their prayer and their lives. The music 'score', the talents to 'play' the instruments are God's. So, just as the conductor needs the players, so the players need the conductor and each other.

This essence of serving each other and this community-building spirit is being fostered among us, especially by the present 'Ministry of Talent' appeal, making known and offering to all the organisations, societies, activities and groups which are available in our parish to everyone (newcomer and longer resident). It is also a means of welcoming and integrating new folk. The following are some of the ways we can be of service to one another.

- Welcomer before Sunday Mass
- Children's Liturgy of the Word Guide
- Altar server, Reader, Music, Church cleaner
- Flower arranger
- Ushers/collectors
- Sacristy helpers, collection counter
- SVP sick/housebound visitor
- Annual parish project team
- RCIA (Journey in Faith) group
- Youth worker, publicity contact
- Transport provider, Making a covenant
- Finance committee work
- Baby sitting, photographer
- Liturgy committee, prayer group, ecumenical (unity)
- Diocesan/Deanery affairs rep
- APF Mission box member/collector
- Baptism/marriage preparation team
- Care. Bereavement, family life
- Lawns and grounds, repairs and maintenance
- Pre-school (mums/toddlers, playschool)
- Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Guides member/leader
- Bingo (male helper/tea lady)
- Entertainments committee, catering team
- Parish office typist/secretary
- Special skills: electrical, carpentry, sewing, art, bricklayer, plumber, plasterer, painter and decorator

The results of this appeal have been most encouraging, with over half the parishioners indicating their willingness to play their part in the 'orchestra'! Our

parish-in-council meets every three months. The replacement of the Sunday evening Mass by a Saturday evening Mass has been one result arising from these meetings.

Change has been and still will be inevitable, following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, where all Catholic Bishops met to guide the Church 'for our times', as we reflect that we are all part of a Pilgrim Church, journeying in faith and loving service. So, for example, the 'Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults' (RCIA) is one official way in which our parish, as part of our Deanery, Diocese and wider Church, is responding to the Bishop's call for a renewed approach to ways of living our Catholic Christian faith. This approach involves the whole community in a process of welcome, instruction and sharing of faith. It is also adapted for the parents and children beginning Holy Communion and for Confirmation candidates. (Even though it is primarily geared to adults taking part in the 'Journey of Faith' process, both present Catholics and those seeking to possibly join in Communion and community with our Catholic Church).

A further example is that lay men and women are now given – again – an opportunity to share closely in giving of the Holy Eucharist – as was the case in the early Church. They may distribute Communion outside Mass, especially to the sick and housebound.

## **7. Our Celebration Year 1978/1988**

In April, 1987, a Silver Jubilee Committee was formed to organise appropriate celebrations and fund-raising events to mark our Jubilee year. Nearly £700 has been raised by coffee mornings, disco parties, bingo sessions and a bazaar.

An unexpected event took place in July 1987. We were given a unique opportunity, privilege and challenge to share our faith via a nationally televised Mass. Our Mass was televised live on 'Morning Worship' ITV at 11.00am on July 12th. Judging from the numerous communications received, a huge impact must have been made. This event was one of the highlights of our Jubilee Year.

Bishop Crispian Hollis has agreed to come later this year to bless our renewed Shrine of Our Lady and celebrate Mass during this Marian year. Some time ago now, much of the original leaded windows of the former baptistery had been vandalised. Parishioners have donated the fifteen replacement windows. These were designed by Brother Gilbert (Prinknash Abbey) and are being installed by a parishioner's husband. The Shrine will contain the renovated statue of Our Lady on a special stand crafted by Michael Whitmarsh-Everiss.

In September, 1987, Christopher Whitehead, one of our faith family, commenced training for the priesthood at Oscott Seminary. He was our regular organist for over two years. So, at a parish meeting, it was unanimously agreed to make him the 1987/88 'Parish Project', supporting him both materially and spiritually. Our first and previous Parish Project was the Eye Camp appeal, which raised the magnificent amount of £1,120.

The highlight of our Jubilee Year is to be on Friday, May 27th, the feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury, when Bishop Mervyn will celebrate Mass and dedicate our church.

Further events arranged are a flower festival on May 27th, 28th and 29th, where the theme is the seven Sacraments. Commemorative plates and this souvenir booklet will be on sale. A parish dinner dance is to take place on June 25th at our St. Peter's High School, Stroud Road.

This is a time of rejoicing and celebration as we look back to thank God for all the graces and blessings received. Grateful thanks go to all for making their contribution to our parish history – those of the past who are departed and those of the present for their continuing contribution to our parish. We also look forward with a renewed resolve that our faith and community spirit will be nurtured and strengthened – and passed on to future generations.

*'You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundation, and Christ Jesus Himself for its main corner-stone. You are being built into a house where God lives in spirit.'*

Ephesians 2:19-22