

A brief history of our Parish:

(With extracts from 'The Story of St Patrick's Parish' by Fr Edmund O'Gorman OFM Conv.)

By the 1800s, Penal Laws introduced during the mid-16th and throughout the 17th century following the Reformation, were gradually being eased. In 1850, under Pope Pius IX, the standard hierarchical system was restored. Archbishops and Bishops were set in new Sees and Northampton became a Bishopric for the first time. With a Bishop appointed, the one church in Northampton became the Cathedral. Our current Bishop, David Oakley who was appointed in 2020, is the thirteenth Bishop of our town.

In comparison to other large towns and cities, Northampton did not have much commercial and industrial activity so very little movement seems to have taken place until around the 1930s when an influx of people to the town brought Catholics seeking work and places to worship. This called for Mass Centres, Chapels of ease and thus Parishes. A major train route passed through the west end of Northampton cutting St James End, Duston and Dallington from the rest of the town.

1939 was the start of the Duston mission and the first time, since the reformation, that a Roman Catholic service was held in Duston. The Village institute was used for services but they were not regular at that time. However, in 1940, due to demand Mass started to be said every Sunday and in 1941 official recognition was given for it to become a Mass Centre under the Cathedral Parish.

After the last war there was a co-ordinated effort and plan to raise funds for the building of a church in Duston; in 1947 the present site in Peveril Road was purchased. By 1953 enough money had been raised to build a brick church. As so many people from the Irish Club at the Cathedral had helped to save money by preparing the site for the building, the church was named after their Patron Saint, Patrick. The church was blessed and opened on 26th April 1953. At that time the building held 200 people.

During that period an assistant priest from the Cathedral headed up what was known as a Diocesan Travelling Mission. He drove a light van, carrying all that was necessary to deliver Mass, around the western Northamptonshire countryside. Masses were said in halls, public houses, private homes and by the time Duston parish was specified, a large army hut. This was erected in Spratton on a small piece land for which we paid a peppercorn rent. This became the English Martyrs Chapel for Catholics living further west towards Market Harborough.

There had long been a history of Greyfriars in Northampton - The Order of Friars Minor Conventual. They gave their name to the area around the top of The Mounts in town where they had set up a Friary in 1225 but when suppression of the Friaries occurred in 1538 they voluntarily surrendered into the hands of Henry VIII and the Great Seal was returned to the General of the Order in Rome. In 1907 Fr Bonaventure Sceberras of the Maltese province arrived in England to re-establish the order over here. In 1910 at the invitation of the bishop of the Southwark diocese the friars started a new foundation firstly in Portishead, followed by Rye, Liverpool and Manchester.

In 1955 the English Greyfriars did not yet have an English Province and were offered control of the western areas of Dallington and Duston, by the then Bishop of Northampton, under the direction of Vicar General of the Arch-diocese of Liverpool. The Cathedral had acquired land in Dallington on which they were going to build a church (St Margaret of Cortona.) The Franciscan Order ran both St Patrick's and St Margaret's. That year, Fr Richard OFM Conv, Guardian of the Friary, arrived to run both churches. As there was yet nowhere for him to live, he turned the Sacristy at St Patrick's into temporary living quarters and local parishioners would successively feed him his main meal. Pond House, the large house opposite the church, was in the process of being purchased and this became the nucleus of the Franciscan Community in 1956. After the Provincial Chapter of 1970, a new Franciscan Study Centre was established in Canterbury and the novitiate was moved to Pond House. This meant a home for the Priests was required and for a number of years they dwelt in a few different properties in the area.

The decision to build a permanent presbytery on St Patrick's Church grounds came after the Province Chapter of 1985. The decision was made by the Friars to relinquish St Margaret's Church in Dallington and pass it over to the care of the Diocese. Pond House was disposed of and the novitiate transferred to a Friary at Barton-on-Irwell, near Eccles. Our new Parish Priest moved into the newly built Presbytery in 1986.

By the early 1990s, as a Parish, we had outgrown the 1950s church and whilst construction began on our current building we moved to temporarily attending weekend Mass in Duston Village Institute and, on occasion, weekday Mass in the Presbytery. Our current building was finished and the opening and dedication occurred on the 27th May 1994.

For the next 20 years St Patrick's was looked after by diocesan Priests then in 2013 Fr Benny Joseph MSFS and his Fransalian Fathers have served us.