

Part 1 – From the foundation of the Parish until the opening of the Church

The ecclesiastical history of Whiteinch, as a separate entity, began with the present mission. Fifty years before, only rural countryside lay between Partick and Dumbarton, and when St. Peter's, Partick, was established in 1858, only one other parish existed between there and Dumbarton: St. Mary's, Duntocher.

In the next fifty years, Glasgow's population increased rapidly. When St. Peter's present church was opened in 1903, it was even then known to be too small for the congregation, despite its 1,200 capacity and the many Sunday Masses. Steps had already been taken to acquire a site farther to the west for another new church,

On November 18th, 1903, the Very Rev. Canon J. Ritchie made it known that he had been instructed by Archbishop John A. Maguire to inform Father Andrew Lynch, a professor at St. Peter's College, that he had been appointed to take charge of a new mission. This was "to be opened at Whiteinch, which is to be called St. Paul's," and that Canon McNairney of St. Peter's would furnish him with all the necessary information. A school-chapel was to be built at once on a site previously acquired, near the corner of Park Street, on the south side of Dumbarton Road. The large villa which already stood on this ground would later become the presbytery and remains so today. Meantime, the first step in bringing together priest and congregation was the renting of Whiteinch Burgh Hall, for two services every Sunday, from the November term in 1903 until the new chapel was built. Father Lynch took up duty on 27th November—he resided, for a time, in St. Peter's Presbytery, in Hyndland Street—and about four hundred of a congregation assisted at the first Mass of the new mission on 29th November, 1903.

In the summer of 1905, the red sandstone, two-storey building was completed. It was designed as a school of eight classrooms on the ground floor, with the church on the floor above, and so planned that, if circumstances demanded, the church could easily have been converted into classrooms. There was sufficient ground between this fine building and the villa, where Father Lynch was now in residence, to accommodate a new church. The leasing of the Burgh Hall was now at an end, and the parishioners of St. Paul's came out joyously to assist at the first Mass in the

new church on 2nd July, 1905. The school was opened on 11th October of the same year, with an initial roll of 185, under the Headmastership of Mr. J. B. Daniel, father of Joseph and John Daniel, both of whom would be priests and indeed members of the Cathedral Chapter, becoming Canons.

Less than fifty years before, Partick was the most westerly district of the city, and Whiteinch only a village on the outskirts, with an estimated population of a hundred families, totalling 555 people, of whom few, if any, would be Catholics. (By 1951, the population of Whiteinch was 23,000.) Most of the land occupied at the earliest times by our parish was taken up with estates, centred principally around Scotstoun House and Jordanhill. The owner of the latter was a Mr. Oswald, who gave his name to Oswald Avenue (later to be known as Queen Victoria Drive), and who leased at a nominal charge to Partick Burgh, an area of garden and parkland for a public park. In 1887, it would be named Victoria Park to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

It is easy to picture the new church/school in a growing suburb with a rural setting, but we need reminding that there was then present a malevolent, provocative bigotry of which many of us are little aware. In September, 1904, for example, a noisy and disturbing meeting was held in Partick, to demonstrate against the foundation of St. Paul's parish, and four days later, a turbulent crowd, supported by five bands playing party tunes, marched from Peel Street to Whiteinch and paraded round Father Lynch's presbytery. Persons were assaulted and property damaged. That attitude, found in some of the Glasgow citizenry was much more common than we might be used to and certainly a lot less shocking than might be found today. The opposition was not simply religious bigotry but racism too as the Catholic growth was seen to be an Irish issue, an immigration problem. It bears great parallels to the current suspicion of immigrants and their religious affiliations, which differ from ours. It is a salutary thing to remember that our predecessors were subject to such treatment in the past as we respond to such social matters today.

To celebrate the opening of the new church on 2nd July, 1905, High Mass was sung by Canon McNairney of St. Peter's, in the presence of His Grace Archbishop Maguire. The assisting clergy were as follows: Deacon, Rev. James Mullen of St. Agnes'; Sub-deacon, Rev. Henry Forbes, Vice-Rector of St. Peter's College; M.C., Rev. Dr. Mullen of St. Patrick's; M.C. at the throne, Rev. Daniel Stewart of St. Charles'; Attending the Archbishop:

Canon Mackintosh of Kinning Park, Canon McCarthy of the Cathedral, and Canon Ritchie, Diocesan Secretary. Others present in the sanctuary were: Dr. Rogan of St. Michael's, Dean Montgomery of Clydebank, Rev. Thomas Currie of St. Anne's, Rev. Professor Taylor of St. Peter's College and Rev. Maurice Ronayne of St. Peter's, Partick. His Grace the Archbishop preached the sermon.

In November, 1908, the first phase of parochial building was completed when Dean Tracy of Barrhead opened the new Parish Hall, a fine building of which every parishioner was rightly proud. Father Ooghe was by then parish priest, and he had requested Dean Tracy to perform this ceremony because he was the oldest serving member of the clergy in the diocese and had been Father Ooghe's own parish priest.

From this time onward the parish of St. Paul's continued to flourish and expand in spite of the effects of two World Wars and the demoralizing years of the depression between the wars, the full effect of which was felt in industrial Whiteinch. The extensive building of new houses, particularly in the Scotstoun district brought many families from the older city parishes. Many Catholics from the Knightswood area also attended St. Paul's until the opening of the parish of St. Ninian's in 1927. The first Parish Priest of St. Ninian's, Father Patrick Reilly, resided with the clergy of St. Paul's during the first year of his ministry in Knightswood. By 1931 the school was so overcrowded that an annexe in Primrose Street had to be opened to accommodate the older pupils. By 1960, the parish roll numbers were well over 4,000 and the older pupils were being educated in the magnificent St. Thomas Aquinas School in Westland Drive which had opened in 1958 and would be replaced by a new modern building on Mitre Road.

Despite widespread unemployment after the First World War, the debt on the old building was cleared by 1938, and the Catholics of Whiteinch confidently hoped that the building of a more suitable and worthy church would soon be undertaken. The outbreak of the Second World War shattered these hopes. This war also brought heartache and suffering to St. Paul's. In the German air attack on Clydebank in March, 1941, several parishioners lost their lives and others were rendered homeless. Father Bonnyman and Father Keane, who served in St. Paul's at that time, were very active during those fateful nights, supporting families and offering comfort.

For some years after the war, building restrictions and the pressing need for new churches in the ever-growing new housing areas, caused more delay in the building of a new church for St. Paul's. It was with great joy, therefore, that the parishioners received the news that permission to build had at last been granted, and the felling of the trees on the site was watched with a good deal of satisfaction, albeit with a tinge of regret at the loss of that green spot on Dumbarton Road. The first trees were cut down in the Autumn of 1957, and progress on the building was watched with interest and admiration by all sections of the community.

Unfortunately, Father Quigley's health, which had not been good for some time, continued to decline, and the burden of the work entailed in running the parish and in the building of the church fell on the very capable shoulders of the senior curate, Father John McGuckin. Catholics in Whiteinch owe him a memorial debt of gratitude for the tremendous work he did during his last few years in St. Paul's. The joyous occasion of the laying of the foundation stone on 9th June, 1959, was marred somewhat by the death of Father Quigley, which had occurred just a few days previously. The grief occasioned by the death of the parish priest was, however, alleviated somewhat when it was learned that his successor was to be Rev. Thomas Keane, until then in charge of St. Columba's. Father Keane had previously been a curate in the parish for eighteen years, years which were the most difficult and trying in the life of the young parish, those years of stagnation between the wars and during the second war. Father Keane had a very warm welcome "Home",

On 30th June, 1960, the beautiful church of St. Paul, Whiteinch, now completed, and a fitting monument to the faith and untiring efforts of the priests and people of the parish, was finally opened. That day, the first solemn High Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Campbell. The Lord and His faithful people entered the new home which it had been a joy and privilege to build.

And so the Parish of Saint Paul's moved into the next stage in a proud history.