

A Short History of the Parish of the Divine Infant of Prague, Bestwood Park, Nottingham

Pre 1961 - Not known

I am a Convert and have little knowledge of Pre-1961 as that was when I started to attend a course of instruction in the Catholic faith and also the Mass.

The following is up to 1971

People from Bestwood Park were brought to Mass in a double decker bus run by a local bus company - Makemsons. I don't know anything about the route it took. I saw it outside Our Lady's in Bulwell. Fr. Gerard Kelly had taken over from Cannon Short who had died. Canon Short was Parish Priest for a long number of years. Fr. Francis Lang was appointed as Assistant Priest. He died suddenly in October 1966. Fr. O'Dwyer was appointed to take his place.

It was said they resembled Bing Crosby (Fr. Kelly) and Bob Hope (Fr. O'Dwyer) in their features!

I am not sure which P.P. was responsible for the Parish Hall (as it was then) being built. I attended one Sunday afternoon when it was officially opened by Fr. Kelly. I lived in Bulwell in those days in Our Lady's Parish, moving to Rise Park in 1967. In 1971 (?) Bishop McGuinness made Bestwood Park, Top Valley, Heronridge, Rise Park, Big Wood and that area into the independent Parish of "**The Divine Infant of Prague**" with Fr. Michael Eastwood as P.P.

1971-1978.

As there was no presbytery in the new parish, Fr. Eastwood lodged with Fr. Patrick Reidy in the presbytery in Bulwell. Fr. Reidy had taken over from Fr. Kelly after he was moved. Eventually Fr. Eastwood managed to rent a house in Bestwood Park, 22 Mosswood Crescent, which became the Priest's

house until the presbytery was built by Fr. 'Bill' Saunders (Not literally!) of which more later.

The present Sanctuary had not been built. The stage at the back was used for Mass and the people faced the other way. The stage wasn't really suitable being too high up for one thing, and Bishop McGuinness authorised the building of the new Sanctuary with its adjoining rooms etc.

At this time all the Masses were celebrated on a Sunday and Fr. Eastwood was only celebrating two in Bestwood Park, leaving the people in Rise Park and Top Valley marooned so to speak (lack of through road). Then Pat Cassidy (R.I.P.) offered his house at No 12, Cardington Close in Rise Park to Fr. Eastwood for him to use on Sundays for Mass to be celebrated there, which is what happened until the road was completed through from Rise Park to Bestwood Park (Bestwood Park Drive West). Fr. Eastwood also used the house to hear confessions on a Saturday afternoon.

I am not sure when the road was completed.

As is very often the case with flat roofs, the roof of the church has been prone to letting the rain in throughout its life so far (2011). As a parish, we were very poor in the early days. I think we were counted as a 'Poor Parish' at one time. Peter Meagher had cause to visit Fr. Eastwood at the house in Mosswood Crescent and found Father wrapped up in a blanket. He daren't spend any money on heating the house!

Early one morning a man called at the house and Fr. answered the door in his dressing gown. The man obviously didn't know Father because he asked "Is Fr. Eastwood in?" Fr. replied "I'll go and get him." He went and got dressed and returned to the door, much to the man's surprise!

When Fr. Eastwood was appointed to a new parish in 1978 a surprise farewell was planned. Unknown to Fr., the whole parish was invited to the church on this particular evening. Peter Meagher got Fr. to come to the church on some pretext. The evenings were dark at this time and the lights

in the church were put out. When Peter brought Fr. into the church we kept silent and Fr. was astonished and surprised to see us all there when the lights were put on.

1978 - 1983

Fr. 'Bill' Saunders was appointed P.P. to succeed Fr. Eastwood in 1978. We had met him before when he was Assistant Priest with Fr. Reidy.

He was responsible for having the presbytery built. He led the parish on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1982. Eric Comery left his wife and daughter at home to come with us. One morning while still in bed he complained of a pain in one arm. Matthew Farrel and myself shared the room with him. When later Eric was at the breakfast table with Helen Aniszewski, her six year old son Reuben and her mother, Eric keeled over with a heart attack and died. Father 'Bill' had the unenviable task of ringing Eric's wife and daughter to tell them what had happened.

Father 'Bill' was moved away in 1983. He was surprised as he hoped to stay longer.

1983 - 1986

Father 'Con' Moynihan was appointed to take over from Fr. 'Bill'. I think it was him that had the car park made safe with tarmac. It was full of humps and hollows before that and treacherous in heavy rain and in the winter.

1986 - 2002

Father Brian Welsh was appointed P.P.

This account is purely my own personal recollections. I may have missed some things out and some dates I am uncertain about.

Neil Horsley