

## *My first memory*

*By*

*Canon Michael Flook V.F.*

*My first memory of preparing for the new church was a visit to Archbishop Ward, who had recently been installed as Archbishop of Cardiff, the diocese of which we were then a part. I remember this visit for two reasons: one, because we both had black Labrador dogs which fought with one another, but more importantly, after our meeting, and from what I told him about the history of the parish and its relationship with St. Joseph's, the Archbishop himself recommended that we should build a church in which the people of the parish could take a pride, otherwise people would always want to go to St. Joseph's for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Following our meeting he sent Bishop Mullins, the then auxiliary bishop, to announce to the parish that we should plan, not for a hall - as we had been doing - but for a new church.*

*My next memory recalls spending a week at home in Newport, in the Christmas holiday, drawing and re-drawing designs for a new church and eventually coming up with the idea of a church shaped like a Celtic Cross. This rough design was handed to the architect, who produced a plan from which the present church was built. Given the go-ahead from Cardiff we set-up a steering committee which met regularly on Sunday afternoons under the chairmanship of Tom Jones J.P., RIP.*

*I would like to mention all the members of this committee, but I am also conscious of all those who worked in the background - too many to be named. I know who they are, they know who they are, but most importantly, God knows who they are and I hope will reward them. I would simply mention Dorothy Jones and Fred Giltinan RIP, of the steering group, as they like Tom are no longer with us. There are many others I would like mention, who are no longer with us, and who worked so hard for the new church. I am sure we all hope they are now having their reward. For those still with us I hope there is a reward waiting for them.*

*I don't need to tell you, as it can be seen clearly, that the quality of materials used in the building is outstanding: the brickwork, the woodwork, and*

*most of all the quality of the benches which were crafted by Mr. Bob Usher & Son, the son being now Fr. Mansel Usher. It took a year to make these benches and because of the quality of the wood used the Ushers made no profit, they simply covered their costs. It was indeed a labour of love.*

*The first piece of earth was turned on November 1988 and the church dedicated and opened on 8th December 1989, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. We are therefore celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. It's also the 60th anniversary of the dual purpose building which is now the parish hall. One week after a bingo session in the hall, one of the parishioners asked me why we play bingo in the church. I suggested to her that we don't play bingo in the church, but we do say Mass in the hall.*

*In 1956 Our Lady Queen of the Universe became a parish in its own right, separate from St. Joseph's. The parish has had ten parish priests since it was founded: Frs. Bernard McCleary, Daniel O'Connell, Benedict McBrearty, William Donovan, Michael Finlan, Ambrose Walsh, Michael Flook, Ross Patterson, Sebastian Mundackal and Cyril Thadathil. These priests have all played their part in the building-up of the parish; but equally if not more important has been the work of the lay apostolate, the dedication of so many fine men and women - some gone some still with us - who will always be in my mind and heart and for whom I want to give thanks to God in this Jubilee Year.*

*I could go on saying so much more about the parish and its people. I simply want to end by wishing Fr. Cyril and all the parishioners - God's blessing and a very happy Jubilee Celebration!*

*Canon Michael Flook, V.F.*

