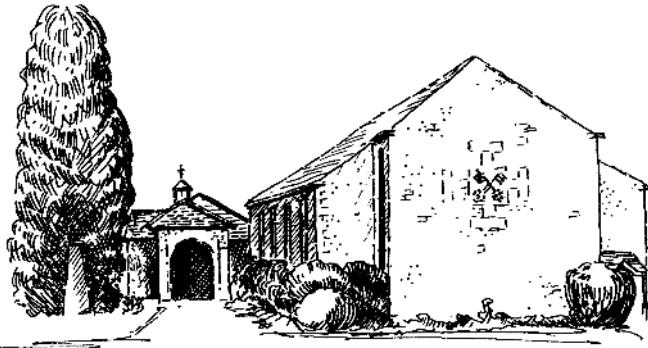


**GUIDE to
St PETER'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
EYNSHAM**



January 2011

THE CHURCH IN 1940

Start at the back of the church. Turn round and look up at the back wall – the east wall and the ceiling. This area was originally going to be the place for the altar and if you have seen any ancient churches in Italy you will recognise the style. Look down at the bottom left corner and a stone tells you that this part of the church was begun on 1st August 1940. Now look above the main entrance where there is a portrait of the first Catholic priest of this Church, Father John Lopes. It was under his inspiration and generosity that this church was built. He wanted a grand building to mark the return of Catholicism to the site of the great Abbey of Eynsham but the 2nd World War made further building impossible. So for almost 30 years, the altar stood here, whilst the rest of the church was just a large wooden hut. Fr. Lopes never gave up his dream for the church to be finished to his original design, and so it was not until after his death in 1961 that a more modest church, the one you see now, could be built, begun in 1966 and consecrated in 1968. Fr. Lopes is buried in the graveyard outside and was so well-known in Eynsham that a road is named after him.

THE NEW CHURCH OF 1968

When the new church was built, the whole church was turned round the other way with a new altar at the west end of the church, just like St Peter's, Rome – though smaller of course! Here at the east end we now have the font where people become members of the church by being baptised – water is poured over their heads whilst special prayers are said. Behind it you will see a Ceramic by Adam Kossowski of Mary receiving her message from God by the Angel. Most of his other work can be seen at Aylesford priory in Kent. Just inside the door of the Church, as in all Catholic churches, is a place where Holy Water is provided so that anyone who enters can mark their forehead with the water as a reminder of their Baptism.

THE ALTAR AND THE LECTERN

Now walk up the church until you reach the sanctuary step. In front of you is the main altar where the priest takes bread and wine at Mass and with ceremonies and prayers calls upon God to make it for us the Body and Blood of Jesus. Jesus said *“This is my body.. This is my blood.. Do this in memory of me.”*, and so that is what we do. As with all altars, the candles are a sign that this is a holy place where God becomes present. Look at the crucifix up on the wall behind the altar. It is a reminder that the God we meet here and proclaim to others is the God we meet in Jesus Christ who died on the cross thus defeating death to bring all who follow him to life with God for ever. Below the crucifix is a carving of the crossed keys of St Peter carved by Peter Nicholas whose grave you can find outside. The other important object here is the reading desk, called the Lectern, where passages from our holy book, the Bible, are read to the people. Sunday Mass is at 10.00am and anyone is welcome to come and see what goes on.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL

Over in the right hand corner of the Church is another altar often used for Mass on weekdays when there are only a few people. Behind this altar is a decorated cupboard, called the Tabernacle, in which is kept (reserved) some of the blessed Bread – the Body of Christ. A candle burns nearby as a sign that Jesus is present in this special way. This special presence is called the Blessed Sacrament, and this is taken regularly to those members of the church who are sick or housebound. The Tabernacle is decorated with a pelican feeding her young with blood from her breast. This is an ancient symbol of how Christ, through his sacrifice made present here, feeds and supports us. Above the tabernacle is a wooden figure of Christ in Majesty. With one hand he blesses us whilst in the other he holds a book on which is written words in Latin : translated they mean *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”*

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

On the right wall here is the first of 14 carvings telling the story of the last walk of Jesus to his death. Here he receives his sentence of death from the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, and you can then follow the story right round the church. You will see him take up his Cross, fall with it three times, meet various people, including his mother Mary, and then you will see him stripped and nailed to the cross and left to die there, before being taken down into the arms of his mother and put into a tomb.

THE STATUES

As you pass round you will have seen a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus and so the Mother of God. Following the words of Jesus from the cross, we honour her as our Mother and always ask her to pray for us. As we do so we can light a candle as a sign to us and to others that even when we stop praying, our Mother Mary continues to pray from her place close to God in the glory of heaven. You will also have seen another statue of Jesus wearing a red robe and showing us his heart. This is a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a symbolic way of showing how much Jesus loves us and the whole world. His death on the cross is the greatest sign of this, but lest we think of this as only a past event, the Sacred Heart reminds us the Jesus is eternally alive and present for us pouring out his love for those who are prepared to receive him and put their faith in him. Here too you can say a prayer and light a candle.

ST PETER AND THE CONFESSIONAL

Before you go, look just to the left of the organ. Above the door there, you will see a rather dark picture of St Peter. Look carefully and you will see his keys, just as you can see them behind the altar and outside on the west wall of the Church. To the left of this door is another door that leads into the Confessional. You are welcome to go in and look at this place where people kneel or sit to share their lives in prayer and in complete confidence with the priest. You can see through to the place where the priest sits to listen, and eventually to offer the forgiveness of God to the person who has made their confession. The keys of St Peter are a reminder of the moment when Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom with the task of leading the church, with the power to forgive the sins of all those who are truly sorry.

THE TOLKIEN ROOM

Attached to the Church is our Hall. It is called the Tolkien Room because it was built with the support and financial help of Fr. John Tolkien (son of the author of Lord of the Rings) who was Parish priest here from 1987 till 1994.

THE HISTORIC GROUNDS

The grounds of this Church and the neighbouring Church of England graveyard lie over the site of Eynsham Abbey. There is a plaque on the wall in the Car Park with more details as well as separate leaflets available in the Church. If our Entrance Corridor is open you can see some artistic representations of what the Anglo-Saxon Minster of 1005 and the late medieval Abbey probably looked like.

MORE DETAILS and a HISTORY OF THE PARISH

Details of all our services are pinned on the doors of the Church and can be found in our Weekly Newsletter which you will find on the table at the back and on our Website which is www.stpeterseynsham.org.uk

There is also a more detailed [history of the Parish](#). Donations to the Church can be made during Sunday Mass or you can deliver them through the door of the Priest's House attached to the Church.

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