
The Catholic Churches of

St Gregory the Great

with Our Lady of Peace

About Our Church



Written by Terry Evans, Parish Sacristan

The Parish is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and served by Douai Abbey Parishes Trust

Contents

Introduction	2
Church Layout	3
Sanctuary	4
Sanctuary Windows	5
Other windows.....	6
Statues High Altar	7
Side Altars.....	7
Other Statues	9
Baptistery.....	11
Nave.....	12
Stations of the Cross	12
Porch.....	12
Outside	13
Additional Photographs	14

Introduction

(Source to * <https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/stratford-upon-avon-st-gregory-the-great/>)

Stratford was originally under the pastoral care of Benedictines based at Wootton Hall, who bought land in the town on which to build a church. In 1852 a diocesan priest, Alfred John Dayman, was appointed to take charge of the new mission. He left five years later and in 1859 the mission was handed back to the Benedictines, who have served ever since.

The present church was on a prominent but then largely rural corner site in 1865-6. It was designed by E. W. Pugin, built by William Moss of Loughborough and opened and blessed by Bishop Ullathorne on 23 October 1866. Money for the building (the final cost of which was just over £2,000) was raised by local subscription; many of the fittings were paid for by individual donors and some were designed by E.W.Pugin.

The presbytery is built partly of stone and partly of yellow brick. Apparently, the stone part next to the church was built in 1889 from designs by G. H. Cox and was later enlarged in brick, though both parts look earlier than 1889.

In 1905 the church interior was decorated with stencil decoration by the Pippet brothers of Solihull. This was overpainted in 1957 in the redecoration that followed the rebuilding of the west end of the church, which had become unstable. The west end was rebuilt to a different Gothic design than Pugin's and included the addition of a narthex (Architects Healing & Overbury of Cheltenham).

In 1966, in its centenary year, the church was consecrated by Archbishop Dwyer. The sanctuary was reordered, and the altar brought forward in 1979.

At the west end of the nave is a modern (1957) organ gallery. The aisles have timber lean-to roofs with raking struts. There is no structural chancel arch. The junction between nave and chancel is marked by the gabled dormers in the nave roof and by more elaborate boarding of the timber roof, which was originally decorated but is now plain painted.

The carved stonework throughout the church is by Boulton of Worcester who also carved the high altar (reconfigured in 1979) and the reredos with its carved figures.

Most of the stained glass is attributed to Tony Drury of Warwick, apart from one window in the north aisle which is probably by Hardman. *

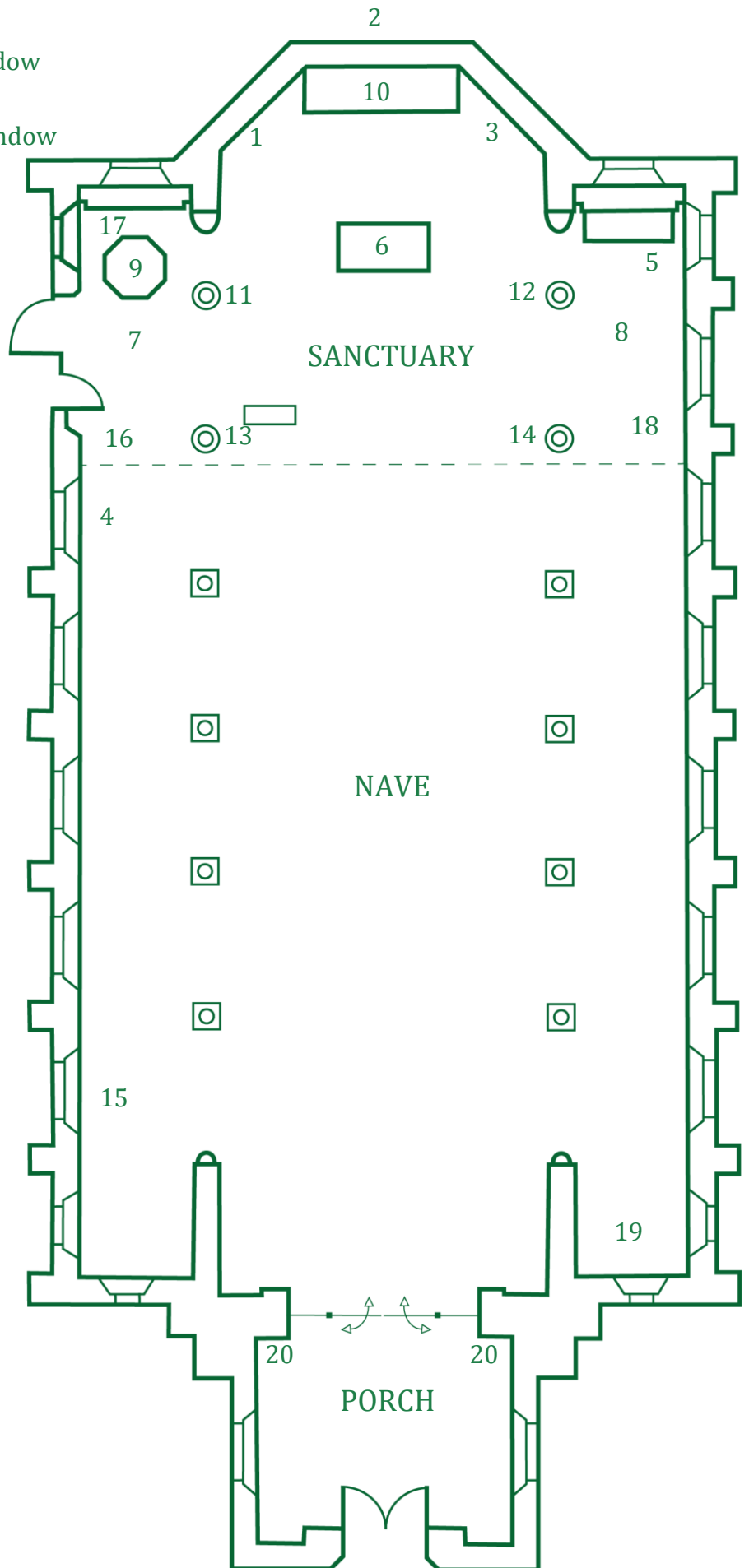
The present bellcote, dating from 1988, is on a much smaller scale than the original.

In 2020 the Altar was renovated, and the original stencil decorations restored.

Please visit our parish website for more information <https://stgregorys-stratford.org>

Church Layout

- 1 Left hand side Sanctuary window
- 2 Centre Sanctuary window
- 3 Right hand side Sanctuary window
- 4 Aisle window
- 5 Window by Our Lady's Altar
- 6 Altar
- 7 St Joseph's Altar
- 8 Our Lady's Altar
- 9 Baptistry
- 10 High Altar
- 11 St Peter
- 12 St Andrew
- 13 St John
- 14 St James
- 15 St Anthony of Padua statue
- 16 Sacred Heart statue
- 17 St Benedict statue
- 18 Our Lady of Lourdes statue
- 19 Our Lady Holding the Christ Child statue
- 20 Holy Water Stoups



Sanctuary

This is the area around the Altar, which is elevated from the nave, on four levels, rising to the High Altar and Tabernacle.



- The Altar is the table at which the bread and wine are consecrated during the Mass. The altar is consecrated and marked with five crosses symbolizing the five wounds of Christ. Within the altar are sealed relics.
- High Altar (10). Before the Second Vatican Council, (1963-65) priests celebrated Mass with their backs turned to worshippers.
- Main Altar (6). Altars were repositioned after the Second Vatican Council so that the priest could face the people.
- Tabernacle. The tabernacle is a special box located behind the High Altar. After Mass, the unused bread, which is referred to as consecrated bread, is placed into the tabernacle. Catholics believe that Christ is really present in the bread.
- Sanctuary lamp. A red light, called the sanctuary lamp, is lit before the tabernacle to show worshippers that the consecrated bread is in the tabernacle.
- Altar rails. These separated the sanctuary from the nave. Communicants knelt at the rails to receive Holy Communion. Rails were abandoned when communicants received communion standing up. The rails in St Gregory's were repositioned to the sides of the sanctuary during the reordering in 2020.
- Lectern. The stand where the bible readings are read and from which the priest gives his homily. The lectern is in the shape of an eagle sitting atop a globe. The eagle, because it soars upward, is often used as symbol of Jesus' Resurrection. It is also a symbol used to depict St John the Evangelist.
- Chair. Used by the chief celebrant to signify his office of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer.

Sanctuary Windows

Left hand side (1)



Three Saint with English connotations.

St Augustine of Canterbury. Dressed as a bishop with mitre and crozier, symbols of the governing office of a bishop or abbot. St Augustine was sent by St Gregory the Great to spread the Christian Faith to England.

St Gregory the Great. Dressed as a pope with papal Tiara and crozier. The white dove on his shoulder represents the Holy Spirit whispering the words he is ready to write with his writing quill. St Gregory was Pope of the Catholic Church between 590 and 604 AD.

St George dressed as a soldier holding a spear and shield. St George was an early Christian martyr who

became popular in England at the time of the crusades.

Underneath these three windows are the words Ora pro benefactore which in English, means, pray for the benefactor.

Centre (2)



S Maria vir (Saint Mary Virgin), crowned and holding lily, representing purity

Salvator Mundi (Saviour of the World) Christ has his right hand raised in blessing and is holding an orb in his left hand representing the world.

St Joseph, holding a lily representing purity and his celibate marriage to Our Lady.

Above the Virgin Mary, in the smaller window is the Alpha (the beginning), over St Joseph, the Omega (the end) and above the Saviour a triangle with three circles representing the Blessed Trinity. The circles contain the words pater (father), filius (son) and spiritus (spirit).

Right Hand side (3)

Three Saints with Benedictine connotations. This church built in 1866, has always been administered by the Benedictine Order.



St Scholastica dressed as a nun with crozier, Scholastica founded an order of Nuns under the direction of her brother Benedict.

St Benedict dressed as a monk with crozier and scroll. A scroll is symbolic of the saint's own writings. Benedict founded the Benedictine Order in around 529 AD. He wrote the rule of St Benedict which became one of the most influential religious rules in Western Christendom.

St Bernard dressed as a Cistercian monk with crozier and book. Bernard was a major reformer of the Benedictine Order.

Underneath these three windows are the words Ora pro benefactore in English, Pray for the benefactor.

Other windows

Aisle window (4)



This window is dedicated to the memory of James and Anne Cox, bequeathed by their daughter Mary Monica. The saints in the window reflect the families' names.

St James the Great, apostle of Jesus, holding a pilgrim staff topped with a gourd, Pilgrims placed gourds on their poles to fill with water or wine to drink on their journey. James is the patron saint of pilgrims.

The Sacred Heart. The heart of Jesus is viewed as a symbol of "God's boundless and passionate love for mankind". It also symbolizes the interior life of Jesus which led to his willingness to lay down his life for us.

St Anne, mother of the virgin Mary with a young Mary at her side.

Window by Our Lady's Altar (5)



Our Lady, Crowned and holding a lily. Underneath the words, Regina sine labe originali, translates as: Queen conceived without stain of original sin. Above in the smaller window is a traditional M for Mary. Lilies at the top represent her virginity.

St Peter, holding two large keys, as the keeper of the gates of heaven. Underneath the words Tu es petrus et super hanc petrum aedificabo ecclesiam mean assevti petri annos which translates as: you are Peter and, on this rock, I will build the church.

Above in the smaller window is Peters papal tiara. and keys. The words at the bottom of this window, in honorem pii noni assecthti petri annos translates as, in honour of Pius 1X the pope at the time.

At the top of the window the small red pane contains the initials HC and the date 1871. This could possibly relate to the donor of the window and the date donated.

Statues High Altar



Statues

(from left to right)

St Gregory with a papal crozier and tiara and holding a book. A book is symbolic of a saint who used the bible to preach the word of God.

St Benedict, with his finger to the lips, symbolic of the Benedictine rule of silence and a book.

Our Lady standing on a crescent moon, representing her miraculous conception and birth.

Between the two sets of statues is the Crucifix, behind which are the initials IHS which is an abbreviation of ΙΗΣΟΥΣ - the Greek word for Jesus. These initials can also be seen in the stencilling in the apse together with PAX which is Latin for peace.

St Joseph, holding a lily representing purity and his celibate marriage to Our Lady and a carpenter's square, which symbolises Joseph's trade, but also the concept of truth.

St Scholastica, dressed as a nun and holding a rosary.

St Augustine, dressed as a bishop holding a crozier and an open book.

Underneath the Top Altar are two round carvings. The one to the left depicts the crucifixion of St Peter and the one to the right the beheading of St Paul.

Side Altars

A side altar is a place of prayer and contemplation. Our side altars are dedicated to St Joseph, on the left and to Our Lady, on the right.

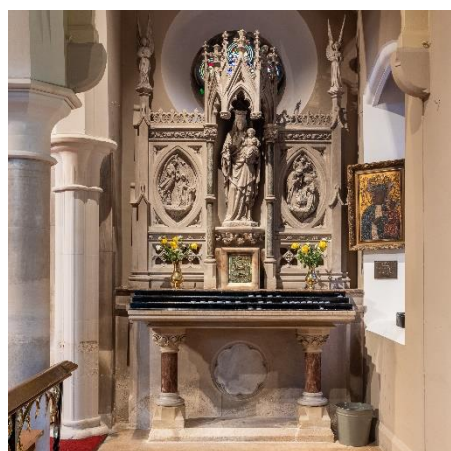
St Joseph's Altar (7)



St Joseph, foster father of Jesus, is holding a lily, which represents his purity and celibate marriage to Our Lady. He has his hands on the shoulders of a young Jesus a symbol of protection.

Behind the Altar a stained-glass window shows St Joseph surrounded by angels.

Our Lady's Altar (8)



Our Lady is crowned and holding the infant Jesus. The infants' fingers are raised in blessing, and he is holding an orb which represents the world.

To the left of the main statue is a scene depicting the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. The Holy Spirit can be seen descending in the form of a dove. Lilies are carried by Gabriel and are in a pot on the floor.

To the right of the main statue is a scene depicting the Nativity of our Blessed Lord.

Behind this altar, is a stained-glass window depicting Mary. She is crowned and has rays of light coming from each hand. The rays symbolise the graces Mary gives to those who ask her.

Tabernacle



The Tabernacle at this altar depicts a haloed Agnes Dei, the Lamb of God. The lamb's right leg is raised holding a pennant with a cross. The lamb stands for innocence and sacrifice, the cross for Jesus' victory over death. This image is also depicted on the main tabernacle at the high altar.

Icon



The Icon at this altar depicts, 'The Black Madonna of Czestochowa'. This image holds significant meaning in Europe and for the Polish in particular, the icon is a gift from the Polish community to commemorate the visit of John Paul the 2nd to England in 1982.

Candles

Votive candles are lit by individuals at this altar. Lighting a candle for someone, is a way to both extend your prayers and show solidarity with the person the prayer is being made on behalf of. The faithful also light candles as a sign of gratitude to God for answered prayers.

Other Statues

Back left clockwise round the church

St Anthony of Padua (15) dressed as a



Franciscan monk, with the Christ Child resting on a book. He is holding a lily. Saint Anthony was a powerful preacher, He is the patron saint of lost and stolen articles,

Flames of fire issue from the heart, representing Christ's total and complete love for us.

The heart is surrounded by light, Jesus is the light of the world.

St Benedict (17) dressed in a Benedictine habit, holding a crozier, to show his position as abbot and carrying a book, the rule of St Benedict.



The Sacred Heart (16) Jesus points to his heart, inviting us to come to him. His right arm is extended, the palm facing forward, welcoming everyone. The marks of the crucifixion are visible on his hands.



The marks of the crucifixion are visible on his hands.

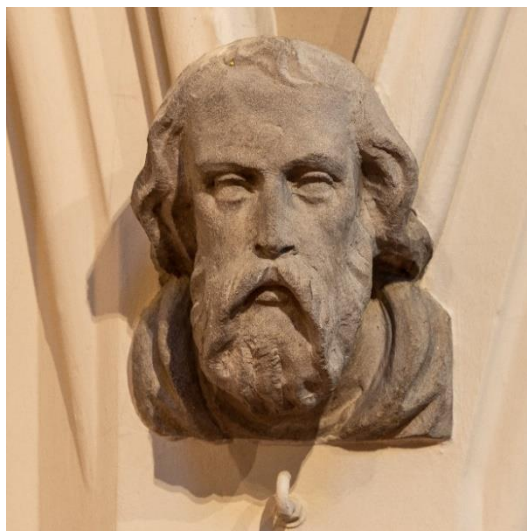
His heart is encircled by a crown of thorns and bears the wound of the lance which pierced his side.

It is surmounted by a cross. These symbols remind us of Jesus' passion.

Our Lady of Lourdes (18) dressed as she appeared to St Bernadette in the Grotto at Massabielle, Lourdes.



Our Lady holding the Christ Child (19).



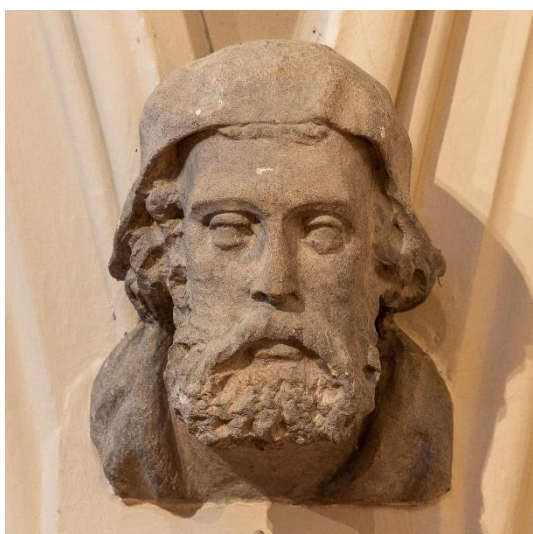
Second left, St John(13), with his brother, St James (14), wearing a pilgrim hat with scallop shell, opposite.

Central Nave/Sanctuary

The twelve heads around the nave and sanctuary are almost certainly those of the twelve Apostles.

It is my personal view that the heads on the Sanctuary are: -

Nearest the altar on the left, St Peter(11) wearing the early form of papal headdress, a camauro, with his brother, St Andrew(12), opposite.



Baptistry



Font (9). A receptacle used for baptism ceremonies.

Paschal candle. A large candle that symbolizes the risen Christ, who is the light of the world. It is a symbol of hope and new life. It is decorated with a cross a symbol of the resurrection, the Greek letters Alpha and Omega (the beginning and the end), and the year. The term 'Paschal' relates to Easter. A new candle is blessed and lit at the Easter Vigil and is relit for Masses throughout the Easter season, which runs from the Easter Vigil to Pentecost, fifty days later. During this season it is placed in a prominent place on the sanctuary and then moved to the baptistry. It is lit there for baptisms and moved to stand at the head of a coffin at funerals.

Nave

Consecration Crosses and Candles

The crosses signify the sanctity of the church. They show where the bishop has anointed the church with chrism or holy water in order to consecrate it. The candle in front of each cross is lit on the anniversary of the consecration, 23rd October. The church was consecrated in 1866.



Stations of the Cross

Around the church there are 14 framed pictures which show the events of Jesus' condemnation, his journey to Calvary, his crucifixion, and his burial.



Porch



Holy Water Stoups- A basin containing holy water, which Catholics dip their fingers in to make the sign of the cross to renew their baptism promises.

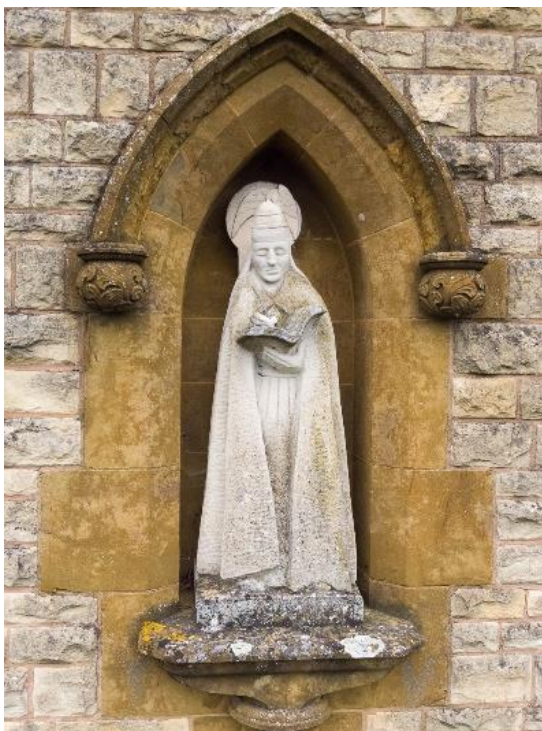


Outside



Above the main door in a niche is St Gregory the Great, patron of this church. This statue was sculpted by Father Bloor, parish priest between 1954 and 1961.

Shrine honouring Our Lady of Lourdes, inspired by the original grotto in Lourdes where Our Lady appeared to St Bernadette.



Additional Photographs



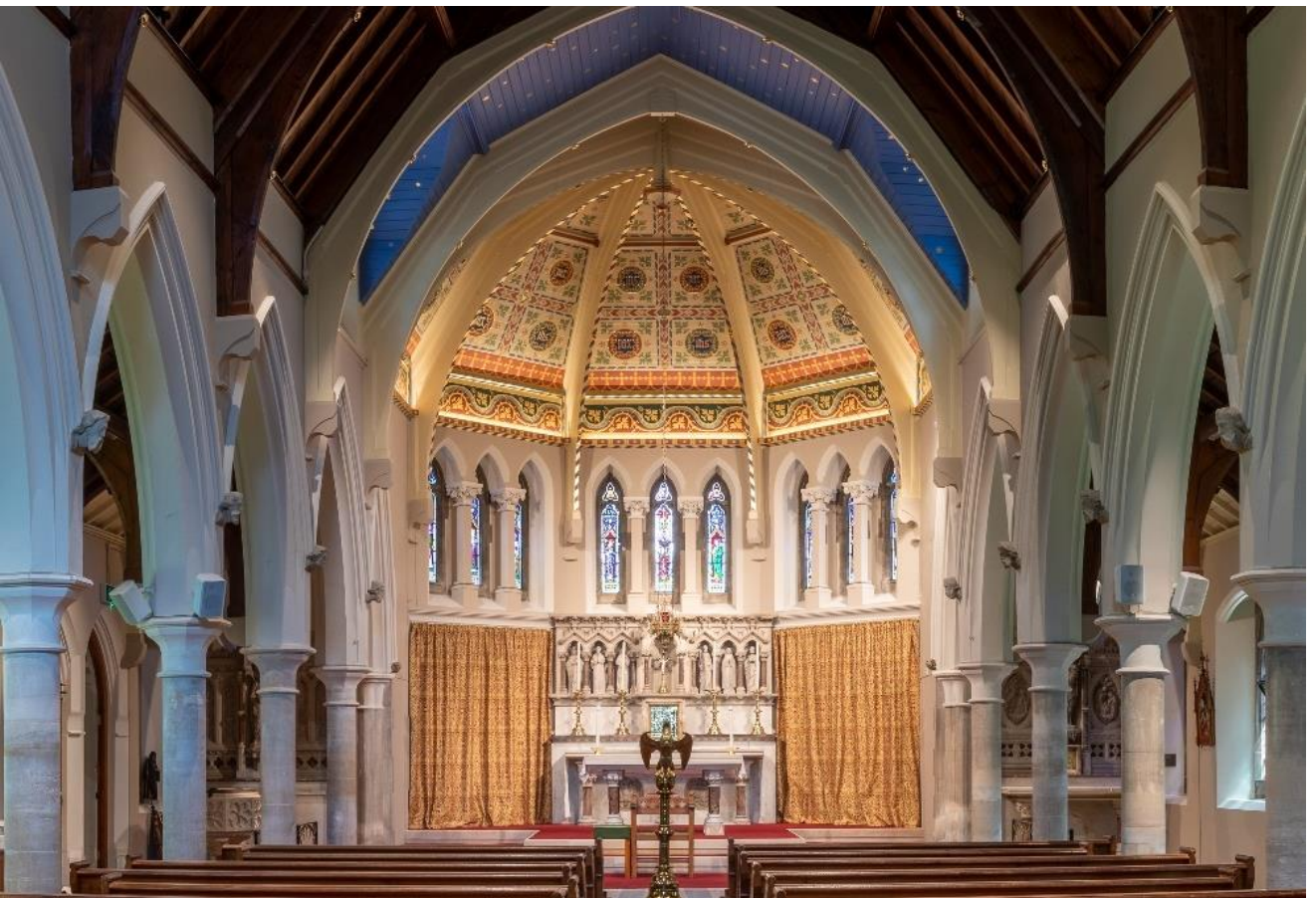
Circa 1866



Circa 1900



Pre 2020



Post 2020

