

# Strokestown Church

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present at the ceremony: Rev. J. J. Kelly, C.C., Roscommon; Rev. J. Gallagher, C.C., Kilmurry; Rev. J. O'Grady, C.C., Killina; Rev. P. Brrady, C.C., Dangan; Rev. T. Kilroy, C.C., Kiltreevan; Rev. J. Duffy, C.C., Elphin; Rev. M. Tarpey, C.C., Ruskey; Rev. J. Kerrigan, C.C., Breedogue; Rev. G. O'Rourke, Fairy-mount; Rev. M. McLoughlin, C.C., Strokestown, and Rev. J. Kelly, C.C., Strokestown.

Many new improvements were carried out to the church while it was closed for reconstruction and repair.

## SEATING FOR 800

The church was extended two bays and all new seating, to give accommodation for 800 people, were installed. A new mortuary was built and the confessionals were reconstructed and recessed into the walls.

The overall height of the church was lowered and a new roof was put on. A new system of central heating was also installed.

The altar was taken down, stone by stone, numbered, and rebuilt. Stain glass windows were also rebuilt.

For the past twelve months, all church services in the parish were held in the local dance hall, the Magnet Ballroom.

The architect was Mr. E. Rhattigan Sligo, and the Quantity Surveyor was Mr. Niall Kelly, Dublin. Principal contractors on the job were Messrs. P. J. McLoughlin & Co., Building Contractors, Longford.

Fr. Gearty, in the course of his sermon, said that when a Pope died, the Cardinals of the world met to elect a new Pope. When they had made a choice it was announced with great feeling from the balcony of St. Peter's, 'We have a Pope.' On this joyous occasion, he could announce with as much feeling to the people of Strokestown, 'We have a church.'

They had a church which had been rebuilt, refurnished, blessed and dedicated to serve the people of the parish for the honour and glory of God. In return, they should first of all give praise and thanks to God, from whom all good things came, and to His Blessed Mother to whom the church was dedicated.

## GRACE AND BEAUTY

They should also thank his Lordship for his far sightedness in pushing for the rebuilding of the church, and also the parish priest who had taken on such a burden — the responsibility and worry of seeing that the job was paid for. Also the Architect, who had given them a thing of grace and beauty, and the contractor and his workmen whose skill and honest endeavour had transformed the church building into one of the finest in the diocese.

Fr. Gearty went on to thank the people of the diocese, and the others who had been most generous in support of the rebuilding project.

They now had a church, and something that looked like a church — clean, and graceful and strong — where they would feel warm and comfortable. Surely this was such a church.

The church was the living heart of the parish. Just as the human heart reached out to the ends of the body, the church reached out to the ends of the parish sending forth the graces and blessings and the good things of God. It was a place where people could come in times of trouble or perplexity and, kneeling in the church, looking at the tabernacle, their trouble would be eased or their problem solved.

Continuing, Fr. Gearty said he was sure the parishioners would take with quiet, Christian fortitude, the task of paying for this church.

He was a native of the parish, and his father and mother were married there. On this account he could speak to the people in plain language about the affairs of the parish.

During the past thirty years they had seen the old church steadily deteriorating. Things had changed. People had moved to other churches, and the farmers of the surrounding areas moved to other markets to buy and sell their produce. Then the Christian way of helping each other to live seemed to be paling, and when one side went down so did the other. That was what had happened.

## "LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS"

Continuing, Fr. Gearty appealed to the parishioners to lift up their hearts and roll up their sleeves. They should have the willingness to work together for the betterment of all, and try something new when something old had failed.

Now, happily, things were changing for the better. They were going ahead again and they would prosper. The markets were beginning to reappear and things are returning to what they were before.

Then this church would be filled from wall to wall with the marmur of people at prayer, and the evening streets would be loud again with the laughter of children.

And with the goodness and grace of God, the Parish of Strokestown would live again, Fr. Gearty added.