

# Roman Catholicism in Mere

After the Reformation the few Roman Catholics who lived in Mere attended the Church at Bonham which was served by the priests of Downside Abbey.

In 1932 it was decided to provide a place of worship in Mere. A room behind the "Butt of Sherry" was rented for services and the first priest was the Reverend Father Odo Langdale, OSB (Order of St. Benedict), a monk from the Benedictine Abbey at Downside and who was the parish priest at St. Benedict's Church, Bonham. This room continued to be used until 1939 when it was needed for other purposes. The Vicar of Mere then gave permission for services to be held in a room at the National School Building and one of the priests was Dom Bruno Hicks, former Abbott of Downside Abbey and a distinguished member of the community.

Congregation numbers gradually increased and it was decided to open a church building. In September 1946 St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was formally opened by the late Rt. Reverend Bishop Lee of Clifton Diocese. Owing to restrictions prevailing at the time it was not possible to build a traditional church, but the interior is pleasing and seats about eighty. The Altar and Stations of the Cross were obtained from the private chapel at Fonthill Abbey.

The site was given by a former resident of Mere, Mrs. Glencross, in memory of her son who was killed at Dunkirk in WWII whilst serving with the Royal Air Force. To raise the capital for this Mrs. Glencross sold her son's car and cashed in his savings certificates. She purchased a plot of land on Pettidge Lane for £100. The community then purchased an old army Nissen hut from surplus stock at Warminster. The building was converted into a church and furnished from fundraising events in the area. A West front was built in red brick and a statue of The Virgin Mary and Child stands above the entrance on a pedestal.

The connection with Bonham has now been severed and the church in Mere is served by priests from St. George's, Warminster.