Catholic Voice Article-

125 YEARS SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF SACRED HEART CHURCH, THORNTON-LE-FYLDE & THE FIRST MASS

In 1898, work began on Sacred Heart Church which was designed by Pugin & Pugin. The cost was about £6,000. On 17th April 1898, the foundation stone was laid by the then Bishop of Liverpool, Rt Rev Thomas Whiteside. The first Parish Priest was Fr Daniel Joseph O'Donoghue. Prior to the opening of the church, Mass was said in the newly opened Sacred Heart School. On 9th March 1899, Sacred Heart Church was opened for Public Mass.

Canon Joseph Bamber was the second and longest-serving Parish Priest from the years 1904-1947. Just after World War I, he was responsible for erecting the fine Rose window in memory of the Fallen of that war.

For the period 1947-1970, under Canon Patrick Joseph Guerin, the third Parish Priest, further changes to the church interior were made especially following Vatican II.

The Catholic Women's League, Thornton Section was formed on 14th May 1972 and is still going strong. Canon Thomas Dakin, Canon Guerin's successor oversaw the Consecration of Sacred Heart Church on 14th January 1973. Sacred Heart Church was one of the founding churches of the Local Ecumenical Covenant (now *Churches Together in Thornton*) in 1988. On 4th July 1997, the Church celebrated the ordination of Rev Anthony Edwards as Permanent Deacon. 17th April 1998 saw the 100th Anniversary of the Church's Foundation. Shortly after on 24th June 1998, the Church celebrated the ordination of Rev David Branford as Priest. Under Fr Branford the church received Grade II listed status. From 2007-2014, Fr Peter Clarke was the sixth Parish Priest followed by the present Parish Priest, Fr Peter Burns. Canon Thomas Dakin who was in retirement at St Nicholas Owen Presbytery, died on 18th February 2019 after 50 years service at Sacred Heart and St Nicholas Owen parishes, Thornton.

On 4th July 2022, Deacon Anthony Edwards celebrated 25 years as a Deacon. Sadly, on 11th June 2023, Deacon Tony passed away after nearly 26 years service at Sacred Heart and St Nicholas Owen parishes.

The 50th Anniversary of the Consecration of Sacred Heart Church was celebrated on 14th January 2023. Later, on 17th April 2023 we saw the 125th Anniversary of the Church's Foundation. Bishop Paul Swarbrick was the principal celebrant of the Mass on that day. To further mark the 125th Anniversary of the Church's Foundation, we had a floral display (as evidenced in the photos of the church interior). Mass was celebrated on 9th March 2024, marking the 125th Anniversary of the first Public Mass at Sacred Heart Church.