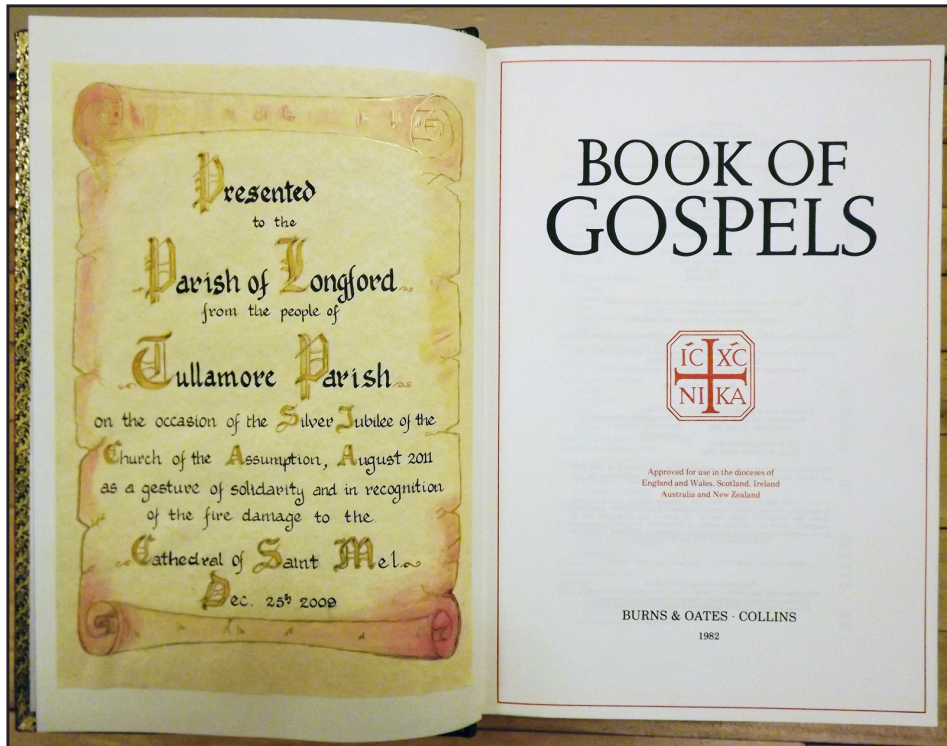




Gift of Gospel Unites Two Parishes



Teresa Neville, Pastoral Council, receives a beautifully embossed Book of Gospels from a Tullamore parishioner.



This year marks the 25th anniversary of the rededication of the Church of the Assumption, Tullamore following its reconstruction after fire had led to its destruction a few years earlier.

On the 25th of August 2011 a Day of Celebration was held in Tullamore parish. Bishop Michael Smith of the Diocese of Meath celebrated Mass along with past and present priests of the parish of Tullamore. Our own Bishop Colm O'Reilly had preached at the rededication of Tullamore church in 1986 and it was surely fitting that he was invited back to give the homily at this year's special celebration. The celebratory Mass was followed by a street party for the people of Tullamore.

Christmas 2009 saw our own beautiful Cathedral meet a similar fate as Tullamore Church had in the 1980s. As a gesture of solidarity with the people of our parish, the parish of Tullamore presented a beautifully bound Book of the Gospels to our parish. The presentation was made during the Celebratory Mass and was accepted on behalf of our parish by Pastoral Council members Teresa Neville and Bernie Mulligan.



SIGNIFICANT DATES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ST. MEL'S CATHEDRAL

- 1840 - Foundation Stone Laid
- 1846 - Side walls and pillars in place
- 1856 - Main building opened and dedicated for public worship
- 1858 - The Stations of the Cross were put in place.
- 1863 - Entrance Lobby and Campanile Tower were completed
- 1889 – 1893 - Entrance Portico with its great columns and entablature was completed.
- 1893 - St. Mel's Cathedral was solemnly consecrated on 19th May, exactly 53 years after the foundation stone was laid.
- 1910 - Dr Hoare helped to provide the chimes that ring out the time every quarter hour.
- 1914 - Giant Organ installed.
- 1932 – 1933 - Stained glass windows put in place
- 1977 - Rededication of the Cathedral after the Sanctuary was redesigned. The new Altar, Bishops Chair and the Canon Stalls are all of limestone. Behind the Bishops Chair is a large Tapestry designed by Ray Carroll and made by Killybegs Carpets Ltd. A painting by Ray Carroll hangs above the Blessed Sacrament Altar.
- 1983 - Dr Colm O'Reilly, as Bishop, saw the completion of the new Choir Gallery and the installation of the new Pipe Organ by Mr Kenneth Jones.
- 1985 - A new roof was put in place.
- 1986 - The ceilings in the side-aisles were replaced.
- 1997 - All windows were rereaded.

Death of Dr Richard Hurley, Design Architect for Restoration of St. Mel's Cathedral

Many people were deeply shocked by the sudden death on Tuesday, 6th of December of Dr. Richard Hurley. Among those very deeply and immediately affected are ourselves, especially those in very regular contact with him in planning for the restoration of St. Mel's Cathedral on which he has been engaged since he was employed here in 2010. His death has deprived us of the services which he was still to give us. Our loss is great. Of course, the feeling of loss and sadness that we are experiencing are of a different kind from those of his wife, Bernadine, and their sons whose distress must be intense. We deeply sympathise with them. Richard Hurley was involved with us here many years ago when the sanctuary of St. Mel's was reordered to accommodate the new style of celebration of the liturgy. While he was no longer involved when that work on the Cathedral was completed, his original plan was clearly reflected in the end product. It had stood the test of time very well until it was destroyed by the fire of Christmas Day 2009. Richard entered the scene again last year when he was an enthusiastic applicant for the role of architect for the current restoration. When awarded the key role of Design Architect, he expressed his delight in being back again. At that time he promised me with the utmost confidence that he would achieve the best possible outcome. As soon as agreement was reached with the other partner architectural firm involved, Fitzgerald Kavanagh and Partners, he threw all his energies into the Association's mammoth task of agreeing a programme for the restoration. Since then he has continued untiringly to press on and meet targets. He was a man in a hurry and the speed with which he delivered his plans would have done credit to a man of half his age. He delivered his last presentation to the Diocesan Art and Architecture Committees on the 16th of November. When he said it was his last, he meant that this would be the one which would be the



The late Dr. Richard Hurley, Design Architect for restoration of St. Mel's Cathedral.

final part of his outline of his vision for the restoration. He had no idea that it would also be his last in a more final sense still. As so often happens in life when we see someone for the last time, as he concluded the presentation he just checked the time that he would need to get to the train and said 'good-bye', neither he nor we having any idea that we would not meet again on earth. We have now lost our Design Architect but not the plans he had so carefully prepared for us. He had, I would like to think, a sense of great satisfaction in reaching the end of the planning phase. I would like to think that achieving this stage in this particular project has somehow rounded off the long and fruitful career of Ireland's best and known and greatly respected Church architect. I would

like to think that this last of the 150 or so major projects of his life meant more to him than most. He had given it his full concentration and brought to it the experience of a lifetime as architect and the insight of many liturgists, of whom the late Father Sean Swayne, Director of the Centre for Pastoral Liturgy in Carlow, was the foremost. I am very touched by the fact the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois has just benefited in the double from the mature and experienced Richard Hurley, doyen of Church architects in Ireland. He was Design Architect for the splendidly restored St Mary's Church in Carrick-on-Shannon which was completed last year and has left us with the plans for St. Mel's Cathedral.

Many people in Longford met him when we had our Open Day on the 18th of September last. He was at the Cathedral Centre in the morning and afternoon and spoke with anyone who sought to speak to him about the model and the draft plans for the Cathedral on display. He was easily recognisable with his imposing presence, tall in stature and impressive in appearance. His gracious manner and willingness to listen to everyone must still be remembered, I believe. He stayed for a long time greeting and talking to people, a tiring exercise in itself but something to which he attached great importance.

I have known Richard Hurley for a very long time. In recent times it was good to have reason to meet with him very often. He was a truly an inspirational man, a man of deep faith and integrity. He was a man who has left a great legacy of fine work in the design of churches and other buildings of note. Among his writings is the beautifully illustrated Irish Church Architecture. We have good reason to be grateful that part of his legacy will enrich us. It is my confident hope that when St. Mel's Cathedral has been restored his contribution will be seen as his final gift not just to us but to the nation as well.

+Colm O'Reilly.