

Parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel 1920 to 1970

Mass was celebrated for the first time in Silsden in 1916. A classroom was hired at the Elliott Street Council School for Sunday Mass and was served from St. Anne's, Keighley.

The first Mass was celebrated by the late Mgr. J. Russell of St. Anne's, Keighley, and then onwards each Sunday alternatively by Father J. Twomey and Father J. Holohan. Refugees from Belgium and France were brought into the district and these helped to increase the number of Catholics in the area to about 50. The Belgian priest, Father Theophan, also gave a helping hand during these early years.

In 1918 the first building to be recognised as a Catholic Church was bought in Albert Square, Keighley Road, Silsden. This building was the old "Oddfellows Hall." The upstairs rooms were converted into a church, while the underneath part remained as dwelling houses. This upstairs room was dedicated to the honour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and became affectionately known amongst parishioners as "The Upper Room."

In 1920, Silsden was made an independent parish with Father Claude B. Warren, O.B.E. as the first Parish Priest. Father Warren had seen service as an Army Chaplain, in the Middle East, in the 1914-1918 War and was decorated with the O.B.E. for his services to the Forces. The untiring efforts of Father Warren were rewarded in 1925 by the building of St. Joseph's church at Cross Hills. St. Joseph's Church caters for all the area from Eastburn to the borders of Colne and Skipton, and is still served by the Priest from Silsden.

Soon after the first Parish Priest's arrival instructions were started on Sunday afternoon for the children of the parish. Father Warren was helped in the instruction of the children by Miss Martha Appleyard and Miss Fitzgerald. Miss Fitzgerald left the parish on marriage and Miss Appleyard continued to help with the children's instructions until 1939.

In 1957, during the pastorate of Father Henry Tattan, the redundant Wesleyan Church in Silsden was acquired for Catholic Worship. A word of thanks must be extended to the local Wesleyan community and the Silsden Urban District Council in helping the Catholic community to acquire this church. It is now in this church that we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Silsden with Steeton.