

# The Marian Pilgrimage: Day ELEVEN: Sunday 17 May 2020

## The Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes at Carfin, Motherwell



### **The Grotto at Carfin is dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes.**

The "Carfin Grotto", was the brainchild of Father, later **Canon Thomas N. Taylor** (died 1963), parish priest of St. Francis Xavier's Parish in the small, mining village of Carfin, two miles east of Motherwell.

Following a trip to France's principal Marian shrine at Lourdes, Canon Taylor's vision was to build a religious memorial in honour of Our Blessed Lady based on the template of the Grotto of Massabielle.

Work on the Carfin version of the Lourdes Grotto began in the early 1920s. The shrine was built, by hand, by local parishioners on a site opposite the Parish Church of St Francis Xavier. Many of the builders were coal miners from Carfin and neighbouring villages out of work during the 1921 Coal Miners' Strike. It is said that Fr. Taylor was aware of the need to keep these workers occupied to minimise the effects of unemployment on their morale. Fr. Taylor inspired hard work and dedication from his workers.

Starting with a bare field in 1920, driven by the faith and zeal of the volunteers resulted in the shrine being largely completed within two years. It officially opened

in 1922. The Grotto's central scene depicted Our Lady's appearance to Saint Bernadette in a bricked, terraced garden which included an altar for outdoor Mass, when the West of Scotland weather allowed. Canon Taylor's book about the Shrine's first thirty years records over three hundred volunteers working on the Grotto in its first two decades. He also records that in one single pilgrimage in 1924 there were over fifty thousand pilgrims.

Carfin quickly became a pilgrimage site for Catholics from across Scotland and beyond. The shrine expanded beyond a single field to many acres between 1922 and the 1960s.

Special services, Masses, and Processions were Services to serve the spiritual needs of the many immigrant communities that had settled in Scotland. There are Irish, Polish, Lithuania, Portuguese, Italian and other communities who have special links with the shrine.

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims of different faiths have visited Carfin.

The Polish Memorials: Our Lady of Czestochowa & St Pope John Paul





In addition to his devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, Canon Taylor also admired Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the "Little Flower". In the Summer of 1901 Canon Taylor read the new English translation of the young French nun's inspirational autobiography. He was so moved by the young nun's life story that he contacted the enclosed Carmel convent in Lisieux and built a strong bond with the Prioress, Mother Mary of Gonazaga, and St. Therese's three surviving sisters who were also Carmelite nuns in the Lisieux convent. Canon Taylor became an acknowledged expert on the life and work of St. Thérèse and beginning in 1902, published regular articles in Catholic newspapers of the day of to engender broader awareness of the little Carmelite sister of Lisieux throughout the United Kingdom. Thanks to the Canon's efforts, her enclosed life of devotion to Jesus and her "little way" to God attracted considerable admiration in Scotland, England and Ireland following these publications. Canon Taylor believed that St. Thérèse, a future Doctor of the Church, would become an important figure early in the new century. He also spoke to the Vatican Committee which considered St. Thérèse's cause for canonization and was

present in Rome in 1925 after which little Thérèse was proclaimed a Saint of the Church.

So, as a measure of his devotion to the Little Flower, the Canon added a statue of St. Thérèse directly across from that of Our Lady of Lourdes.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux is the secondary patroness of the grotto after Our Lady. By the time of Canon Taylor's death in 1963, the Carfin Lourdes Grotto enjoyed a high national profile and attracted tens of thousands of pilgrims annually.



A Statue to Our Lady of Fatima



A Glass Chapel situated on a raised "Headland" above the main pilgrim walkway was dedicated in June 1989 by Bishop Joseph Devine, Bishop of Motherwell.

Following the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival, the glass chapel used at the event was relocated to Carfin Grotto, where it was placed near the arena of Our Lady, Star of the Sea in the lower garden area of the shrine. This building was subsequently dedicated to the victims of the Lockerbie Disaster. A Boeing 747 aircraft named 'Maid of the Seas', travelling en route from London Heathrow to New York's Kennedy Airport, exploded above the town of Lockerbie killing two hundred and fifty-nine people on board the plane and eleven people on the ground when it crashed near Lockerbie on 21 Dec 1988.

. The Chapel was therefore named 'Our Lady, Maid of the Seas' in memory of those who lost their lives in this tragedy.

Mass is celebrated daily in Chapel of **Our Lady, Maid of the Seas**.

## **SCALAN : AN ABERDEEN CONNECTION.**



A new altar has been installed at the Grotto to honour the Scots who were forced to practise their Catholic faith clandestinely through two and a half centuries of persecution, from 1560 onwards.

The Scalán altar is named after the secret seminary in the Braes of Glenlivet which operated from 1716 to 1799 in contravention of the Penal Laws against Catholicism. These laws forbade the celebration of Mass in Scotland, and priests

were prohibited from being in Scotland at all. Fr Michael Briody, president of the Scalan Association said: "There are several shrines at Carfin Grotto honouring the Irish, Polish, The Scalan altar pays tribute to those native-born Scots who kept the faith through centuries of persecution, especially in The Enzie of Banffshire, Lochaber, Strathglass, 'Blessed Morar', the Southern Hebrides and Galloway. The Scalan altar is a worthy representative of them all."

St John Ogilvie the Jesuit Martyr, Glasgow 1615



St Francis Xavier's Parish Church

The Parish Church adjoins the Shrine.

There is a Cenacolo Community Support and Prayer Group based at The Parish Church.