

## *Our Beautiful Church*

— A SERIES OF ARTICLES DEPICTING THE MAGNIFICENCE OF OUR CHURCH —

### PART TWO: THE ORIGINS AND THE CONCEPT

#### THE BEGINNING

It required a generation of planning and saving — nearly twenty-five years — in order to realize the vision of the first pastor, Msgr. McLaughlin, of a group of buildings here in Forest Hills that exemplified architectural unity, enlivened the then fledgling community and served the faithful of the area. His successors and now Msgr. Funaro, our pastor, have shouldered the responsibility of maintaining and enhancing the church, school, rectory and convent. Even now, work continues to be done in the ongoing effort to provide continuity to the constant improvement of our magnificent facilities — for instance, work in the convent building has started to convert it into a retirement home for priests. But, through the years, the true trustees of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs have been the people who, with their unstinting support, have sustained the pastors' efforts.

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church reflects several historical impulses. It owes something to the medieval flowering of ecclesiastical architecture and it is also a product of the nineteenth century gothic revival period in America. It borrows from both in some rather interesting ways. But it is a reflection, too, of the determination of a then small Catholic community in Forest Hills to make a substantial statement of faith during the uncertain years of the 1930s.

#### MEDIEVAL TIES

We know that our church was modeled after the English gothic cathedral at Durham, constructed during the years 1093 to 1130 — which would place it within a period of growing Catholic influence in Europe. It was the time of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (*d. 1153*), who was one of the Church's greatest preachers. His aim was to “*move hearts, not expound scripture.*” Henry II was king of England; Thomas Becket had not yet met his end.

The role of architect, artist and builder was generally filled by one man, and so modestly that few names have come down to us from that time. Only their work reminds us of the creative and practical problems they had to solve in order to erect churches that would be durable, not too costly and relatively safe from fire.

Our church here at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs is not an exact copy of the Durham cathedral — it is much smaller, and certain architectural elements were simplified or eliminated in order to keep costs at a manageable level. Nevertheless, the artistic integrity remains, as can be seen in the comparative pictures printed on page 5.

Our next article in this series (*A Walk through the Church*) will delve into general points of interest, before we proceed to discuss and depict specific elements.

## *Our Beautiful Church* (continuation)

### COMPARING SIMILARITIES

The similarities between Durham cathedral and Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church become very apparent when looking at basic architectural aspects and stylistic elements. For instance (see below), when comparing the main doors, the naves and the floor plans, the fact that they are conceptually identical jumps to the eye.

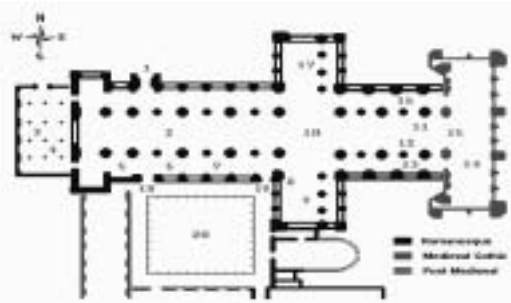
Photo at right: Durham cathedral, seen from the train station.



DURHAM CATHEDRAL



Main doors

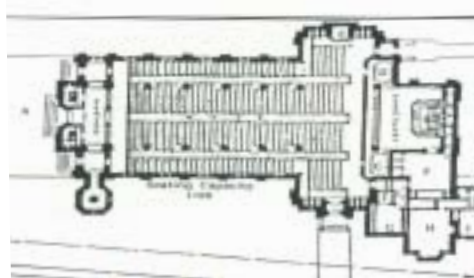


Floor plans



Views of the naves

OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS CHURCH



Photos (except Durham) by Pepa Tanousis

