

St Michael's Church - Built in 1875

EXTERIER - Spire and Belfry

Our tour begins before entering the church.

1 **The Spire and Belfry** were on the original building plans for the church in 1875 but were not erected until 1992. The Cross on top of the spire is half a ton in weight and is made of stainless steel. It is 14½ ft high and was fabricated by Fisher Engineering, Ballinamallard.

2 **The Tympanum** above the central doorway has sculptured groups of the Last Judgement. In its centre, Christ is on his throne as angels blow horns signalling the second coming of Christ. Added to this is a sense of drama in the contrast of Good and Evil. Strategically located right in the middle of the Last Judgment is Michael the Archangel. The sculpture is surrounded by a canopy rising to a height of over 30ft.

3 **St Michael's statue** is situated in a prominent place high above the entrance. It occupies the central pier between two windows standing guard above its inhabitants, both residents and strangers alike.

4 **Three central double doorways** (1876) are elaborately moulded, carved and enriched by polished Newry granite.

5 **Flying Buttresses** (1921) During the original building of the church, the tenant on the Darling Street side refused to allow scaffolding on his premises, making the building of the church very difficult. It was not until 1921, when the premises were acquired as a home for priests working in St. Michael's, that the west wall was reinforced by massive flying-buttresses. These buttresses are a unique feature of the church today and can be accessed from the main street through the gate at the side of the church. The architect in 1921 was James Donnelly, the contractor was James Harvey and Michael Donnelly built the flying buttresses. All three resided in Enniskillen.

INTERIOR of Church – The interior of the church measures 160ft long and 61ft wide.

6 **Gallery** – This is the original gallery which was extended in the 1990's to accommodate the newly refurbished organ.

7 **Organ** – Between 1885 and 1909 the old organ was replaced with a magnificent instrument built by Telford and Telford, Dublin. The organ was redesigned and refurbished in 1964 and again in 2000/01 by Wells-Kennedy Partnership Organ Builders, Lisburn. Its casing is in solid African walnut. The organ has two manual pedals and 1818 pipes of tin construction. The three angels from the original organ adorn the new pipes.

8 **The medallion paintings of the twelve Apostles** in the spandrels of the arches, under the clerestory were painted by a Belfast artist named Allen who died young.

9 **Stations of the Cross** – The Stations of the Cross, erected between 1882-84, are of French origin. An identical set of Stations were also found in a church in Fecamp in Normandy, France.

Pine Ceiling – This rich wooden ceiling was erected in the nave aisles of the church in 1898

Pillars – The interior of the church presents an arcade on each side of seven bays of lofty moulded arches, supported on cylindrical columns whose capitals are heavy with vegetable matter and bearded faces' and have elaborate carvings in the soffits of the arches.

8 **Tabernacle** – where the Eucharist or 'Holy Communion' is reserved. This magnificent ornamental piece was built by local craftsman Michael Hoy. Michael carved the Lamb, representing the Risen Christ, on the front of the Tabernacle and the carvings on the other three sides were salvaged from the side altars during refurbishment in the 1990s. The decorative canopies surrounding the tabernacle were also taken from the side altars and some of the short cylindrical marble supports from the altar railings were incorporated, supporting the top pinnacle.

9 **The Sanctuary** – the area where we see the High Altar, has a semi-octagonal termination and advantage has been taken of the natural slope of the ground to construct a crypt underneath.

10 **High Altar** – The florid Italian-Gothic High Altar was built in 1882 and later between 1885-1909, the side altars were added, along with the aisles being seated. The main Altar, which is the original Altar, has a very significant carving of the Pieta, an image depicting the body of the dead Christ resting on His mother's lap.

11 **The Ambo** (Lectern 1990's) – from which the Bible is read, features some of the old stone works, including the marble pillars from the side altars and small carved capitals. The ambo was made and carved by Michael Hoy, including the eagle, representing St. John the apostle, on the front. On the right hand side of the eagle the two church spires have been carved, one representing St Macartin's Church and the other St Michael's Church.

12 **Our Lady's Altar** – The stand beneath the statue of Our Lady, the mother of Christ, was made in the 1990s, as was the deeply carved Madonna and Child on the front. This piece of stone was salvaged from the base of the pulpit, which stood further down the church and was removed during the 1990s refurbishment. The statue of Our Lady and the baby Jesus is of Italian origin.

13 **The Presider's chair**, situated in the centre of the High Altar in front of where the original Tabernacle used to be, was assembled using various pieces from the original side altars. The original altar railings in the church were utilised to form two short decorative sides that enclose the seating area for priests. These run from the reredos, the decorative stone backdrop to the Altar area, towards the congregation. The three new carvings; the Madonna and Child, the eagle on the ambo, and the lamb on the front of the tabernacle, were all designed by Tom Mullarkey, and carved by Michael Hoy.

14 **The Aumbry** (2012) – This chamber is where the Holy Oils, used for Baptism, Confirmation and the Anointing of the Sick, are stored. It was designed by architects McCormick Tracey Mullarkey, Derry. The baptismal font in front of the Aumbry has been in the church since c1921.

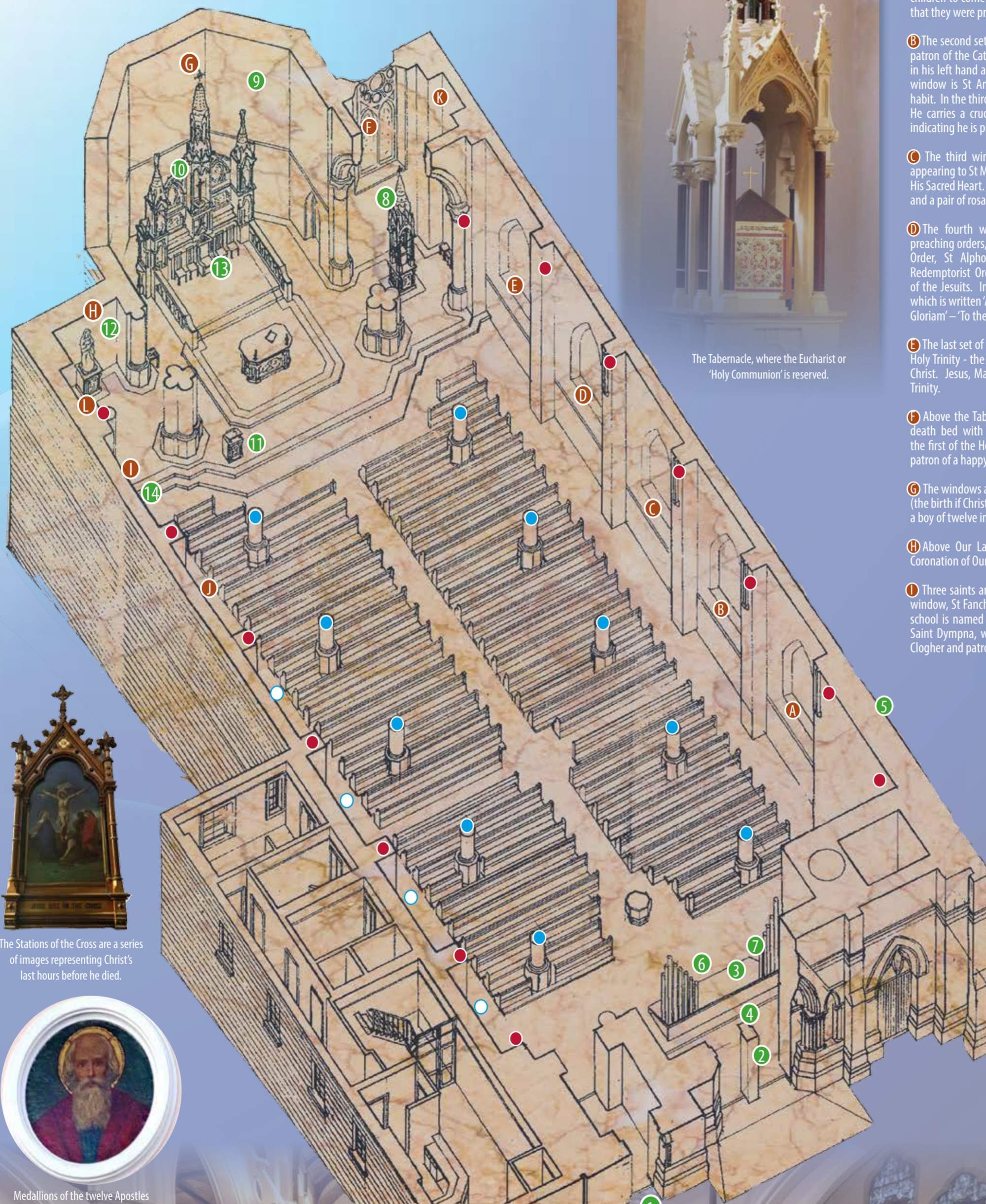
The Crypt – is underneath the sanctuary. It is a semi-octagonal termination and various celebrations take place here on specific occasions. The crypt is accessed through the gates at the side of the church.

Two priests are buried in the Vault in the Crypt. Rev James Shiel died on 30th November 1846. He was very much loved and highly respected by the people of the town so much so that all of the businesses closed for his funeral. His hearse, drawn by four horses, conveyed his coffin to the chapel for burial. He was originally buried in the old church and when St Michael's Church was being erected the sarcophagus was transferred to its vault.

Venerable Archdeacon James McMeel, the founder of the present church, died on 24th August 1882 and his remains were interred in the vault at St Michael's also. Hundreds lined the streets for the funeral as the hearse, drawn by four horses, made its way to the church. Over 80 clergy participated in the funeral service, 100 young people wearing blue and white veils represented the Children of Mary and 400 members of the Confraternity of the Holy Family made up part of the very large crowd. The stained glass window of St Patrick, above Our Lady's Altar, is dedicated to the memory of Archdeacon McMeel.

St. Michael's Church - Plan

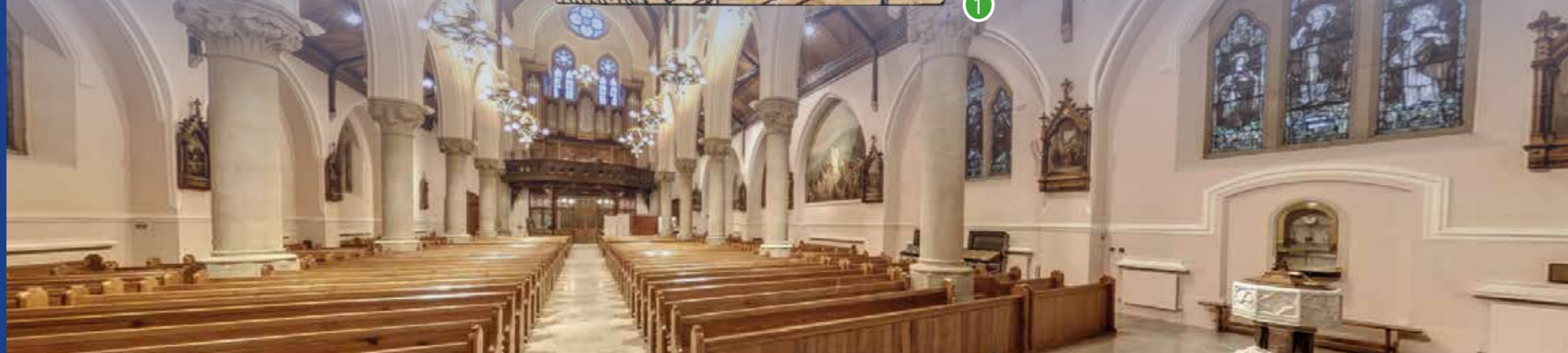
'One of the most beautiful and devotional parish churches in the country' (McKenna 1920)



The Stations of the Cross are a series of images representing Christ's last hours before he died.



Medallions of the twelve Apostles



Stained Glass Windows

c1895 by Mayer and Co. of Munich

A The first window, nearest to the entrance, shows Christ holding a child in his arms, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.' This window acknowledges that they were produced by Mayer and Co. of Munich.

B The second set of windows depicts Saints Aloysius, a patron of the Catholic youth and is depicted with a lily in his left hand and a crucifix in his right. In the centre window is St Anthony dressed in a Franciscan monk habit. In the third section is a Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier. He carries a crucifix and shows his right hand raised indicating he is preaching.

C The third window in the south aisle shows Jesus appearing to St Marguerite Mary Alacoque, showing her His Sacred Heart. In front of her are an open prayer book and a pair of rosary beads.

D The fourth window depicts the founders of the preaching orders, St Dominic, founder of the Dominican Order, St Alphonsus, the founder member of the Redemptorist Order and St Ignatius founder member of the Jesuits. In his hands he holds an open book on which is written 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam' – 'To the greater Glory of God'.

E The last set of windows in the south aisle depicts the Holy Trinity - the Holy Spirit (Dove), God the Father and Christ. Jesus, Mary and Joseph also depict the earthly Trinity.

F Above the Tabernacle is the scene of Joseph on his death bed with Jesus and Mary present. As he was the first of the Holy Family to die, he is invoked as the patron of a happy death.

G The windows above the High Altar are of The Nativity (the birth of Christ), the Adoration of the Magi and Jesus, a boy of twelve in the temple of Jerusalem.

H Above Our Lady's altar is a widow depicting the Coronation of Our Lady.

I Three saints are depicted on the front left hand side window, St Fanchea (a sister of St Enda), our local girls' school is named after her, St Molaise of Devenish and Saint Dymna, who is the patroness of the Diocese of Clogher and patron saint of mental illness.

J The window, located beside the murals, shows three more saints, St Sinele, St Aedan and St Columbanus. Each of these saints had local connections. St Sinele was one of the twelve apostles of Ireland. He set up his monastery on Cleenish Island on Lough Erne. St Columbanus studied under St Sinele and established numerous monasteries throughout Europe. St Aedan (usually referred to as Aidan) was a lifelong friend of St Molaise.

K and L On both sides of the Sanctuary, in the side altars, there are two single windows. These, according to Frank Rogers (2004) are among the finest in the entire church. One portrays St Patrick and the other is St Bridget. The St Bridget window is dedicated to Archdeacon Smollen who was the priest responsible for putting in the stained glass windows 1886-1909 and the St Patrick window is dedicated to Venerable Archdeacon McMeel, as during his time the church was built. The clerestory windows, the area above the arches, were plain when the church was built and it was only after the World War II that Clotkey of Belfast replaced them with beautiful tinted antique glass.

The Celtic cross on the apex of the front gable is from this time.



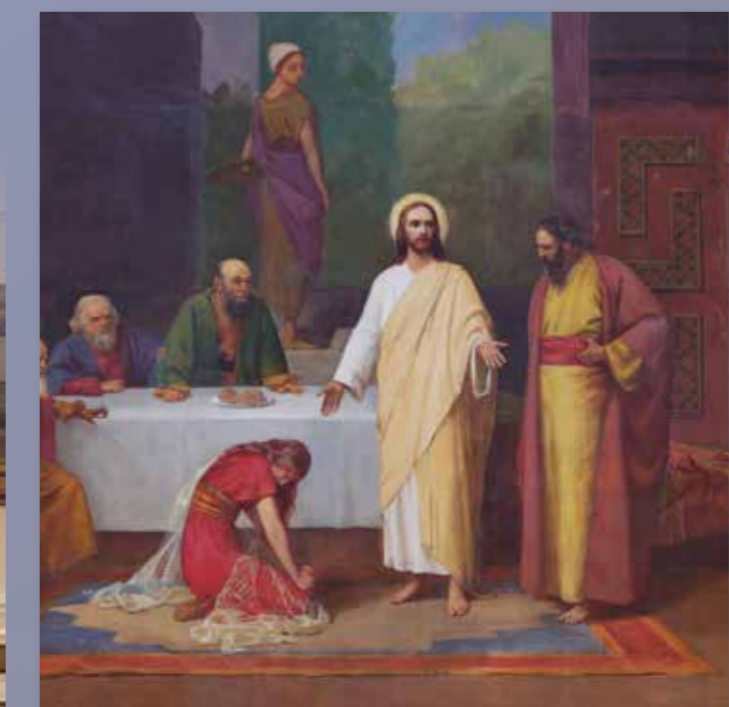
PAINTINGS

Paintings by Charles Russell: RHA 1852-1910

Charles Russell was born in Dumbarton on 4th February 1852. In 1890s he made one of his few sojournments into Church art, painting in situ a series of didactic paintings for St Michael's Church: The Transfiguration, The Sermon on the Mount, Magdalene at the Feet of Our Lord and The Baptism in Jordan.

These paintings, on the blind arches on the east side of the Church, are unusual in that although they are instructive there is no aesthetic subordination to meaning as is common in this type of work. From their conception these paintings have been highly regarded. Writers in the Irish Builder on 1st November 1900, comment on the 'pleasure that is derived from their viewing' and on how 'The colour is rich and telling, whilst the general grouping and strong Eastern character is devotional and appropriate.' More recently Dr Michael Wynne from the National Gallery of Ireland has noted that these, 'Charles Russell murals are of the highest quality and can only be related to the religious works of the Pre-Raphaelites in England or the Nazarenes in Rome.'

The painting of the Transfiguration over the chancel arch (the entrance into the Sanctuary or Altar area) was also painted by Charles Russell. This is the vision of Christ appearing in a post-Resurrection image of glory before He was crucified. The story passed down through generations is that the Sermon on the Mount was painted using the faces of local people. This was common practice at that time.



The Nativity Painted by Michael Healy

On the left hand side as you enter the church there is a painting of The Nativity, or birth of Christ, by Michael Healy. It is not known exactly how he came to be commissioned in c. 1908 to paint The Nativity in St Michael's. The Nativity appears to be unique in that it is the only known oil mural in a Church by Healy. The Nativity has been noted to show the painters indebtedness to his observation of early Renaissance painting in Florence. The style, detail, humanism, serenity and harmony of the painting all have their basis in Renaissance art. With the colouring Healy appears to have developed a totally new means of expression using colours that are more often associated with the stained glass with which he was associated. The reds, blues and purples in The Nativity have a jewel like quality which is normally associated with stained glass. Healy became so prolific in the art of stained glass that he is now regarded as one of Ireland's greatest artists in this medium. Healy designed and produced the very beautiful windows in the Convent of Mercy, Enniskillen. He died on Monday 22nd September 1941.

