

This is a drawing of the old church in 1803 by a parishioner (drawn from memory for Trimble 1880)

### St Michael's Church 1803

Welcome to St Michael's Catholic Church, Enniskillen. There has been a Catholic church on this site, on the island town of Enniskillen, for over 200 years. The first church was built here in 1803 and people prayed there for 65 years. The old church had steps down from the main street, through a yard shaded by lovely chestnut trees. There was no seating in the church so people had to stand.

In 1820 Lord Belmore, who lived at Castle Coole, gave the Parish Priest a beautiful crucifix. He had this piece made in Bethlehem during his visit to the Holy Land.

In 1868 the galleries became unsafe and after this the church could no longer be used.

### St Michael's Church 1875

The present church was officially opened on 17th March 1875 and named after St Michael the Archangel. When the church was opened first there was only a wooden altar and pulpit and very few seats. It was not until 1882-84 that the main Altar and Stations of the Cross were erected. Two workers died building the church.

The cost of building the new church was £12,000, the money came mainly from the parishioners even though most of them were very poor at this time. The decision to call the church after St Michael was important when we think of Enniskillen as a fortification, both in the times of the Maguires and as a garrison town.

Enniskillen is one of the few towns in the whole of Ireland where Catholics have a church on the main street. Some people at that time fought against the building of the church and the walls had to be guarded nightly. The church had to be built from the inside out as the tenant on the Darling Street side would not allow scaffolding on his premises, making the building of the church very difficult. This meant that the west wall of the church was not as strong as it should be so it had to be strengthened in 1921. The big concrete archways at the side of the church are called flying buttresses and these were built to strengthen the church wall. The church is 160ft long and 61ft wide. Some consider this church to have one of the highest roofs on any church in Ireland.

Two priests are buried in the Vault in the Crypt. One was Rev James Shiel who 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, brought his coffin to the chapel for burial. Rev. Shiels was originally buried in the old church and when St Michael's Church was being built the coffin was relocated. >



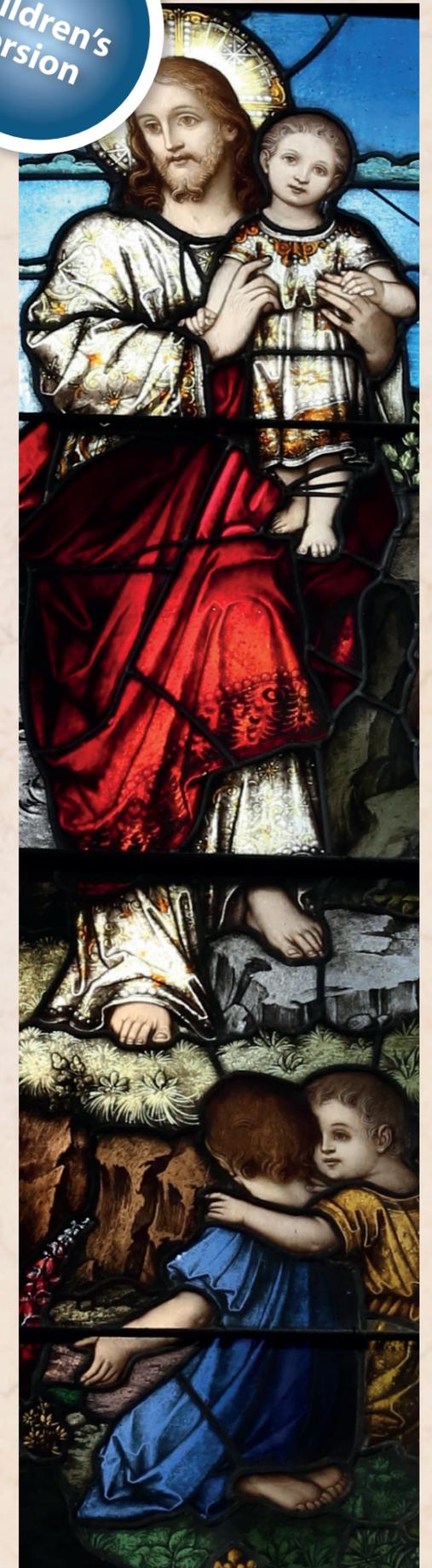
> Archdeacon James McMeel, the founder of the present church, died on 24th August 1882 and he is also buried in the vault at St Michael's. Hundreds lined the streets for the funeral as the hearse, drawn by four horses, made its way to the church. Over 80 clergy took part in the funeral service.



On the 26th June 2012 a very significant and historic event took place in St Michael's Church, when Queen Elizabeth II attended a service of thanksgiving in St Macartin's Cathedral and then crossed the road to St Michael's Church accompanied by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. This was very special as the Queen had not visited a Catholic church in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. As a way of remembering such an important event Monsignor Peter got a well-known artist to do a painting. This painting is in the Fermanagh County Museum.



Children's Version



This is the first window nearest to the entrance of the Church, and shows Christ holding a child in his arms, 'Suffer little children to come unto me'.

**Spire and Belfry** - The spire and belfry were erected in 1992.



**The Tympanum** - Above the main doorway of the church there are carved images of the Last Judgement. In the middle of the carving is Michael the Archangel.

**The Organ** - was redesigned in 2000/01. The wood around the organ is solid African walnut. The organ has two manual pedals and 1818 pipes made of tin. The three angels from the original organ adorn the new pipes.

**The medallion paintings** up high in the arches of the church are of the twelve Apostles.



**Stations of the Cross** - erected 1882-84, tells the story of Christ's last hours before He died.



**Tabernacle** - 1991-96 is where the Holy Communion is kept.

**High Altar** - The Italian style main altar was built in 1882.

**The Ambo (Lectern)** - (1990s) from which the Bible is read.



**Our Lady's Altar** - The statue of Our Lady and the baby Jesus is of Italian origin.

**The Aumbry (2012)** - This chamber is where the Holy Oils, used for Baptism, Confirmation and the Anointing of the Sick, are stored. The baptismal font has been in the church since c1921.

**Charles Russell** - In the 1890s Charles Russell painted **The Transfiguration**. This painting is high above the Altar. This is a vision of Christ appearing in glory before He was crucified.



**The Sermon on the Mount** is where Jesus preached about blessings. 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 for artists at that time.



**Mary Magdalene at the Feet of Our Lord** - This is when Mary Magdalene, a friend of Jesus, washed His feet.

**The Baptism in the Jordan** - Jesus getting baptised.



**Michael Healy (c1908)** - The Nativity painting (or the birth of Christ).

**The Stained Glass Windows** c1895 were made by Mayor and Co. Munich.



SAINT  
MICHAEL'S  
CHURCH  
*Enniskillen*