

# SOLEMN OPENING

CHURCH OF  
ST. GERARD  
BELLSHILL

*Sunday, 13th June*

*1971*



*St. Gerard's, Bellsbill*



SOLEMN  
OPENING

by

The Right Reverend  
**Francis Thomson**  
Bishop of Motherwell

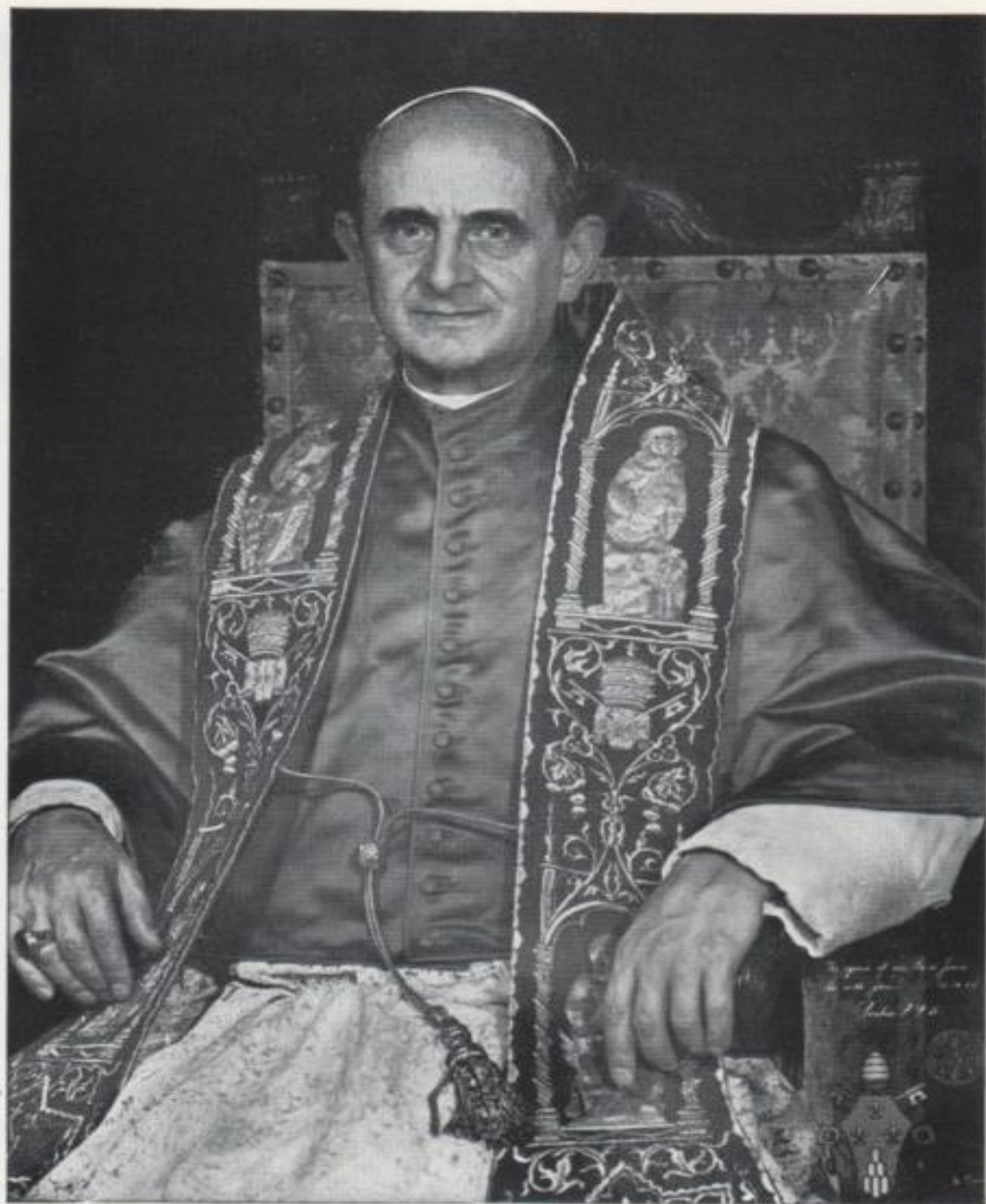
SUNDAY, 13th JUNE  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE



VATICAN CITY.

HOLY FATHER CORDIALLY IMPARTS PARISH  
PRIEST, CLERGY AND PARISHIONERS, ST. GERARD'S,  
BELLSHILL, LANARKSHIRE, OCCASION SOLEMN  
OPENING NEW CHURCH, PATERNAL APOSTOLIC  
BLESSING IMploRED.





HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI

DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL



BISHOP'S HOUSE, BOTHWELL, GLASGOW

18th May, 1971.

DEAR FATHER MOSS,

To preside at the solemn opening of a new church is one of the more pleasant tasks of a bishop. It is visible evidence that yet another congregation has become sufficiently strong to take its place as an independent "family" within the wider family of the Diocese. The parish of Saint Gerard traces its origins to the strong Catholic faith of those responsible for founding Holy Family parish in Mossend more than a century ago, and of their descendants who in more recent times established the parish of the Sacred Heart. It is a sign that the same faith is still very much alive that it should have been necessary to build Saint Gerard's only twenty years after the completion of a new church for the Sacred Heart parish, from which Saint Gerard's derives more immediately. With such a history, I am confident that Saint Gerard's will come to be known not only as a church building but also as a living parish, the beginnings of which we have already seen so clearly during the past four years since the foundation of the parish. May that life continue to flourish, and may it manifest itself in a people resplendent with all the Christian virtues, particularly that of unbounded charity exercised towards all in that community of which they are a part.

With my warm blessing on this happy occasion to you and to all the parishioners.

† FRANCIS THOMSON,

*Bishop of Motherwell*



THE RIGHT REVEREND FRANCIS THOMSON,  
*Bishop of Motherwell.*

ST. GERARD'S,  
BELLSHILL.

MY DEAR PARISHIONERS,

On 1st September, 1967, our parish of St. Gerard's was established. Today we are opening a new chapter in its history with the solemn dedication of our beautiful new church.

No new church is ever opened without a history of persevering effort by priest and people. I realise all too well the debt of gratitude I owe God and so many wonderful parishioners and friends.

It is our hope and prayer that this new home dedicated to the good Lord today under the patronage of St. Gerard may be to us what the church of old was to our forefathers—a well-spring of charity and peace. In this house of God may we ever grow in the knowledge and the imitation of the Prince of Peace Whose prayer was "that all may be one."

In your name I wish to pay tribute to the architect for a strikingly beautiful church and most effective as a setting for the new liturgy: to contractors and workmen for work of which they may be justly proud.

Although it is good to build a church whose beauty would do honour to God, the important thing is to make good use of the church. We can do this by our greater love for the Mass, and by our greater frequentation of the Sacraments. For all of us, our new church should be what it really is—"the House of God and Gate of Heaven."

May God bless all who by their generosity made this day possible.

(Rev.) PATRICK J. MOSS.





REV. PATRICK J. MOSS

## *A Brief History of the Parish and Area*

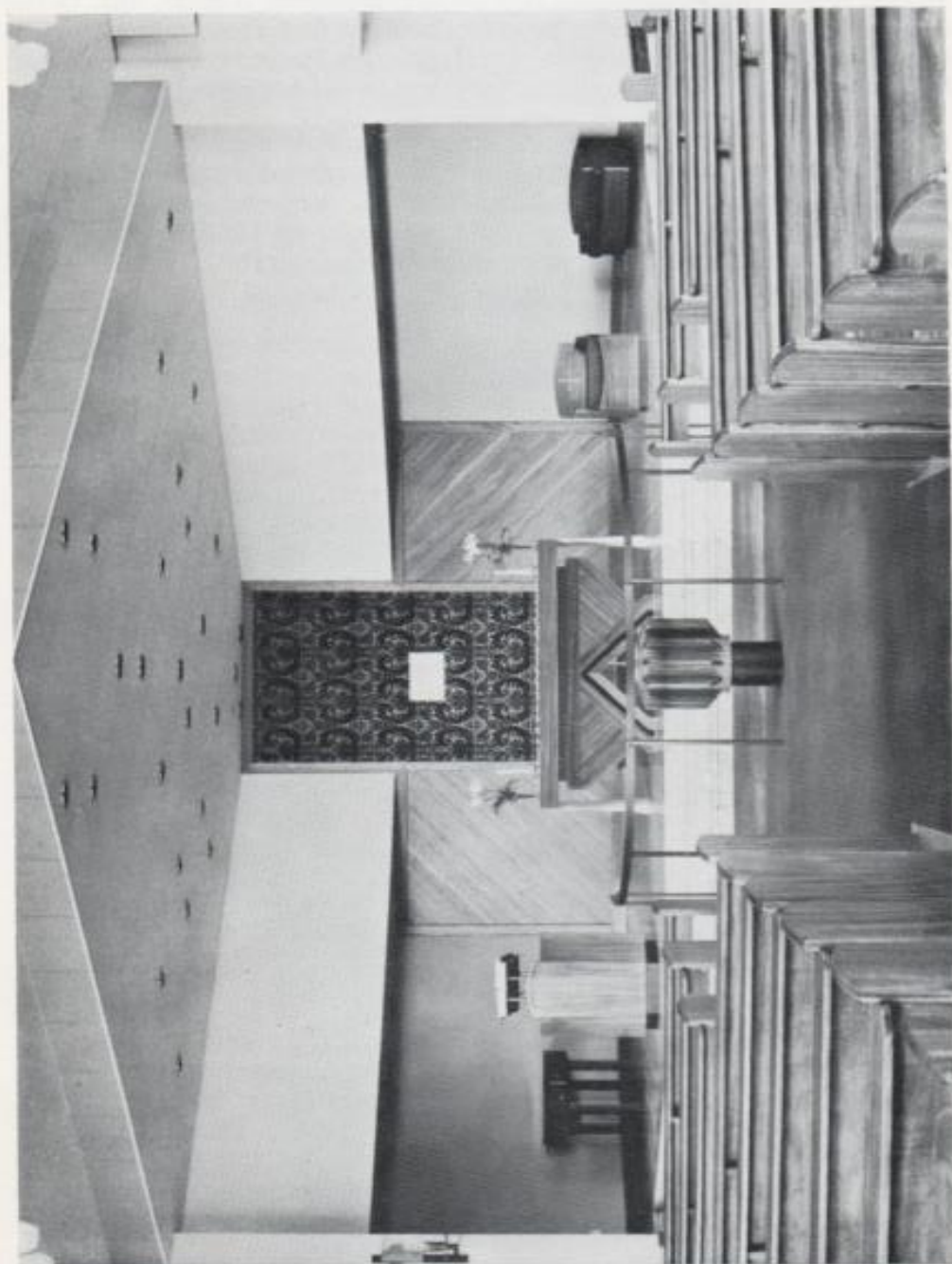
Although in the Diocese of Motherwell few visible signs remain of our Catholic past, there are many place-names which call to mind our ancient religious associations. The Cathedral town of Motherwell itself and the Well named after Our Lady—the *Matris Fontae* of the Bishop's Pastorals—Chryston in the northern part of the diocese, Holytown, Old Monkland and its connection with the monks of Melrose, Chapelhall and Tannochside—a word presumed to be derived from St. Thenaw, mother of St. Mungo—all proclaim the existence of a long established Catholic tradition.

The work of St. Mungo in Glasgow and the surrounding area is familiar, but after his death in 612, we have sparse knowledge of the progress of the Church until after the Norman Conquest. The Normans, with their genius for order and organisations, not confined to political administration but exhibited also in ecclesiastical affairs, made their presence felt in Scotland, and in the reign of David I, from 1124 until 1153, the Catholic religion was firmly established in Lanarkshire. Collegiate churches were set up in Bothwell in 1398 and in Carnwath in 1424. These are of interest since they are still in good condition and used as places of worship by the Church of Scotland. The Earl of Douglas enlarged the church in Bothwell and named it St. Bride in honour of his family's patron saint. It shares with St. Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow, the architectural feature of having a stone roof and the good fortune to have escaped the zeal of the Reformers.

Coming nearer the present day, we find that in 1836 there were 118 Catholics in the Parish of Bothwell, an area contained approximately within the boundary of the present Bothwell Parliamentary Constituency.

The Parish of St. Andrew, Glasgow (now the Cathedral), was established in 1816 and during the following years various factors were combining to cause a considerable increase in the population—including the number of Catholics—in Central Scotland.

The harsh realities of the Irish Famine and the Highland Clearances, added to the greatly increased demands for labour, caused by the onset of the Industrial Revolution, were responsible for a great influx of people to Lanarkshire. To tend to their spiritual needs the first Mission was established in Airdrie in 1836.



There were at that time extensive deposits of iron ore in the Calderbank-Chapelhall region, and in 1857 a school was built in Chapelhall in which Mass was celebrated by a priest from Airdrie. But in the early 1860s the local iron ore was exhausted and the workers had to move elsewhere, many of them transferring to Holytown, Mossend and Bellshill, where the coal and iron industries were beginning to thrive.

This rendered necessary the setting up of a new parish in the district and Mossend was chosen as being in the most central situation for Holytown, New Stevenston, Mossend and Bellshill. A chapel school (now the present Holy Family Parochial Hall) was built in 1868 by Fr. James Milne, who became the resident priest in Mossend in 1872. His successor, Dr. Fox, built the present Holy Family Church in 1884.

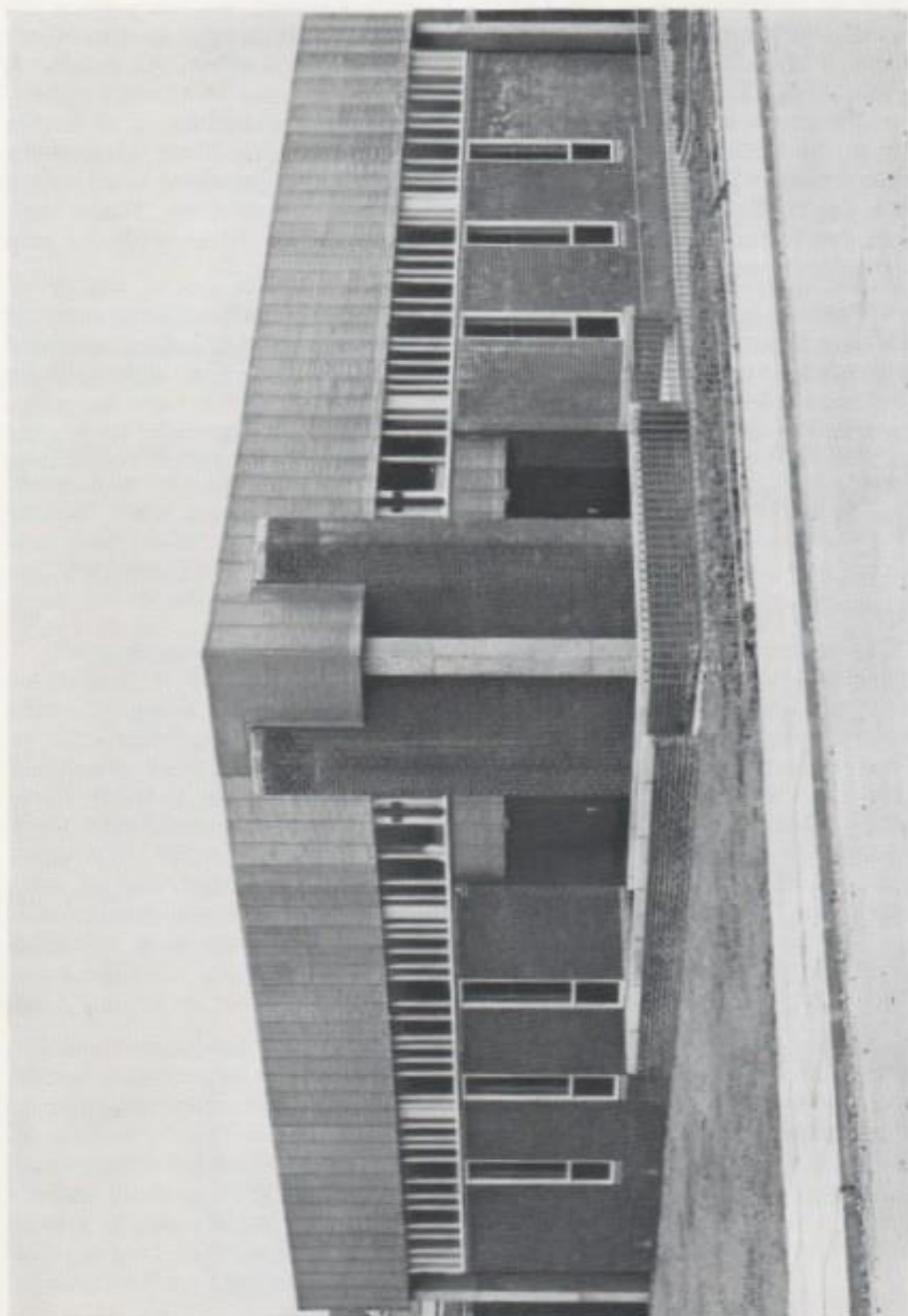
Now began a period, which many might consider, somewhat nostalgically, as the great days in Mossend. This could well be true, since what followed was no mean achievement. We must remember, too, that all this took place, often against a background of economic depression and hardship, in an age not so affluent as ours and in which Catholics were by no means a privileged class. When Dr. Fox left, the parish grew to the extent that two curates were needed to assist his successor, Fr. Hughes, who planned and built the Holy Family Presbytery. Next came Fr. John Scannell who built the Holy Family School, which was opened by Archbishop Maguire in January 1907.

But no reference to the past would be complete without a mention of the Lithuanians, who formed such a distinctive section of the community. They were noted chiefly for the tenacity with which they clung to the Faith and the ease with which they adapted themselves to their new environment. This latter trait is exemplified in one of the classic Mossend stories concerning a Lithuanian who, at Hampden, exhorted the Scottish team in these words, "Come on, boys. Give them what we gave them at Bannockburn!" Can integration go further than that?

Coming after a succession of well-loved Parish Priests, Fr. William Flanagan was the one who played a big part in the setting up of the Sacred Heart Parish, Bellshill.

After the end of World War II, considerable rehousing had taken place in the area south of Bellshill, resulting in the need for a new Parish, and this was established under Fr. James Butler in 1949 and the present Sacred Heart Church was opened by Bishop Douglas in 1951. As the need for new housing still remained, the available land was now on the north side of Bellshill, and considerable building, both private and by the County Council, took place there in the 1960s.

This caused another hiving-off operation, and the new Parish was established in September, 1967, with Fr. P. J. Moss in charge, and, being in close proximity to one of the finest maternity hospitals in the country, naturally was dedicated to St. Gerard Majella.



While awaiting the construction of the present new church, through the kind co-operation of the Lanark County Council, we were given the use of the premises formerly known as the Noble School in the North Road. This school was so named after a famous teacher, Alexander J. Noble, F.E.I.S.—Headmaster there for 51 years, from 1873 until 1924—who became a legend in his lifetime and who has the distinction of having a road in Bellshill named after him. In the building, three classrooms were converted into a pleasing little chapel. Other classrooms have served as a centre for meetings and the usual parochial activities. These have been conducted under the inspiring leadership of Fr. Moss with the help of a faithful and hard-working Parish Council.

Now we have a splendid new Church to serve as the focal point of our community. Today's happy occasion calls to mind the many devoted priests who have served us in the past. We acknowledge our debt to them and with affection remember them in our prayers, for they have bequeathed to us a heritage which we in St. Gerard's are grateful to possess and which we shall endeavour to preserve and hand on to those who will follow us.

*" Faith of our Fathers, Holy Faith,  
We will be true to thee till death."*



## *Saint*

### *Gerard Majella*

In the little town of Muro, some fifty miles to the south of Naples, Gerard Majella was born of pious parents on the 6th April, 1726. His father was a struggling tailor. Today his native village boasts a bronze statue to the tall, gaunt young man who was determined to become a saint.

When he was twelve, his father died. The boy was apprenticed to a tailor, a good employer. But his foreman, an ill-tempered fellow, treated Gerard most cruelly. At twenty Gerard set up for himself as a fully qualified tailor. As might be expected, he was conscientiousness itself. All the time he was given to unending prayer, fasting and, despite his none too robust health, severe penances.

Gerard was twenty-three when he made his final and successful bid to become a Redemptorist Brother. Twice before he made attempts to join a religious community; the first time presenting himself at a convent of the Capuchins. His youth—he was sixteen at the time—and his very indifferent health decided against him. Later, he inquired of a Redemptorist Brother, who dissuaded him from joining. It was on 17th May, 1749, that Gerard entered the monastery of Our Lady at Iliceto. Within these walls he was to spend the greater part of his religious life. That life was to last but six short years; but they were to be six years of unremitting domestic work, of countless conversions, of astounding miracles, of unspeakable austerities and trials, and of a Love of God and his neighbour. A witness described him as "a man made entirely for God, unable to remain a single instant without God."

So obvious was Gerard's sanctity that his novitiate was shortened and he was admitted to profession on July 16th, 1752. He was now a Redemptorist lay-brother; henceforth after his own sanctification, domestic work of all kinds was to be his professional duty. Gerard knew well that all authentic holiness is to be found in the sphere of life allotted to each one by God, and the thoroughness and constancy in the discharge of the duties of one's state; that it is not the *what* one does in God's service, but the *why* and the *how* that matters; that whatever we do for the glory of God will be amply rewarded.

Gerard was not a priest, and yet he converted innumerable sinners. From childhood he was aflame with zeal for his Master and his Master's

interests. "I would give my life a thousand times," he would say, "that God might not be offended." His God-given power to read the consciences of men has won for him from grateful souls the title, "Patron of a good Confession."

God seems to give Gerard special power to help mothers. During his life he showed that power more than once. Since his death, his help has been so great and so frequent that he is often called "the Saint of happy deliveries." Thousands of mothers have cause to thank him, and many boys have his name in gratitude.

Gerard's life tells of miracles. Sometimes the miraculous in the lives of the Saints makes good people despair of imitating the one thing that is to be imitated in the Saints—their sanctity. We cannot too often remind ourselves that Saints were not saints because they worked miracles, but that they worked miracles because they were saints. The sanctity came first. It was said of St. Gerard that his life was a "continuous miracle."

He was only twenty-nine when he died on October 15th, 1755. His feast is kept on 16th of October.





## *St. Gerard's Church and Presbytery*

The church is in the heart of the Shirrell housing development, on the north side of Bellshill, on a site large enough to contain church, presbytery, generous car-parking and space for a hall at a later date.

The open area to the north is designated as the site for a Catholic school.

The site is virtually surrounded by housing, and an attempt has been made to design the church complex in a manner and scale complementary to the dwellings of the people.

The church, which is almost square on plan, will seat approximately 500 and the seating is arranged with aisles radiating from the sanctuary, which is situated in the south-east corner of the square, the main entrance being on the opposite or north-east corner.

Ancillary accommodation to the church includes a day chapel to seat 50 people, with separate entrance, a meeting room, priests' sacristy, boys' sacristy, working sacristy, toilet accommodation, and boiler-house.

The presbytery, which is linked to the church, contains accommodation for the Parish Priest, two curates, and a housekeeper.

Externally, the buildings are finished with a golden brown facing brick, produced in Lanarkshire, and the church has a deep fascia of copper covered bituminous felt. Both buildings have flat roofs.

Floor levels have been kept low to minimise steps at entrances, and a ramp is provided to one of the entrances for ease of access for wheel-chairs.

Internally, the buildings are simply finished, with painted plaster walls and ceilings, except in the church which has a ceiling of acoustic tiles. Floors are generally of timber with vinyl covering where appropriate, the aisles of the church being carpeted. The sanctuary floor is of terrazzo tiles in two colours, and the vestibules are floored with ceramic tiles.

The heating system, which serves both church and presbytery, is oil fired.

Construction of the buildings commenced in December, 1969, and was completed in May, 1971.

CULLEN, LOCHHEAD & BROWN.

---

## *List of Contractors*

<i>Builder Work</i>	-	-	Cannon Construction. ( <i>In liquidation.</i> ) Scott & Co. (Builders) Ltd., Motherwell.
<i>Joiner Work</i>	-	-	Red Cedar Ltd., Hamilton.
<i>Plumber</i>	-	-	James Bryce & Sons Ltd., Coatbridge.
<i>Roofing</i>	-	-	Briggs-Amasco Ltd., Rutherglen.
<i>Plaster Work</i>	-	-	Archibald Rowatt & Sons, Hamilton.
<i>Electrician</i>	-	-	William Briody, Bellshill.
<i>Glazier</i>	-	-	George C. Kirk Ltd., Glasgow.
<i>Painter</i>	-	-	Munro & Junor Ltd., Hamilton.
<i>Flooring</i>	-	-	The Veitchi Company Ltd., Rutherglen.
<i>Heating</i>	-	-	Acme Heating Company Ltd., Rutherglen.
<i>Tiling</i>	-	-	J. Morton Ltd., Paisley.
<i>Suspended Ceilings</i>	-	-	Wm. Gibson & Co. Ltd., Paisley.
<i>Seating</i>	-	-	Colin Hunter Ltd., Clydebank.
<i>Ironmongery</i>	-	-	Taylor & Miller Ltd., Glasgow.
<i>Altar and Sanctuary Furnishings</i>	-	-	J. McNally, Bellshill.
<i>Sanitary Fittings</i>	-	-	Shanks & Co. Ltd., Glasgow.



---

JOHN S. BURNS & SONS  
25 FINLAS STREET  
GLASGOW, N.I.

---