

A new Catholic Church was opened yesterday at Avondale. The church has seating accommodation for nearly 200 people, and its interior appearance is very attractive. The walls and ceiling are lined with steel, painted in white and blue, with light blue and gold facings. The sanctuary is in the form of an arched recess, and, though more lavishly furnished, is in keeping with the general decorations. The altar is of white marble, and standing out in bold relief in the background is a statue of almost heroic size of the Blessed Virgin, under whose patronage the church was blessed and opened. The sacristies are situated at the rear of the sanctuary, with entrances at either side of the altar. The church is built of wood, and cost about £500. It is situated close to the main thoroughfare on a large section which is free of debt. The builder was Mr. Reardon. The opening and dedication of the church took place yesterday morning in the presence of a large number of people, including many visitors from the city, who drove out. The Hibernian Society and the St. Benedict's Old Boys' Club were represented by the officers and members. Prior to the ceremony the Right Rev. Mgr. O'Reilly addressed the congregation. He congratulated the people and their pastor, the Very Rev. Dean Gillan, V.G., on the completion of the church, and hoped that it would bring many blessings to the district. Auckland, he said, was expanding in all directions, and he trusted that in the not very distant future Avondale would partake more liberally in the general prosperity. At present there were few Catholics in the district, and it spoke much for their piety and enterprise in carrying out such an ambitious undertaking as the church in which they were that day assembled. Mass would be celebrated there regularly, and while the population at present was small, he hoped that before long they would have a resident priest stationed there. The church was to be called the Church of the Immaculate Conception, and this recalled the fact that it was nearly fifty years ago since he assisted in the dedication of a church of that name on the site where the Bishop's palace now stands. That district was now thickly populated and prosperous, and that Avondale would be in the same prosperous condition fifty years hence was his earnest prayer.

Monsignor O'Reilly then blessed the church and dedicated it to the honor and glory of God under the invocation of Mary of the Immaculate Conception. He then celebrated Mass. The members of the St. Benedict's choir and altar boys rendered the appropriate music, Miss Reardon presiding at the organ.

The Very Rev. Dean Gillan, V.G., announced at the conclusion of Mass that the collections amounted to over £33, and this, with money already in hand, brought the total up to about £60. He thanked the people most heartily for their generosity, and also expressed the pleasure it gave both the people and himself to have the Right Rev. Mgr. O'Reilly perform the opening ceremony. They would all be pleased to learn that the Monsignore was now almost completely restored to health, and that he would resume charge of his parish at Thames in the course of a few days. The Dean went on to refer to the difficulties that beset him at the outset. Harassed by a heavy debt at St. Benedict's, he was not inclined to incur further liabilities. However, the erection of a church at Avondale was a work of pressing necessity; and after carefully going into the question of ways and means he found that he was able to procure a considerable portion of the material at greatly reduced rates. This decided him to go on with the building of the church, and he trusted now that a good start had been made, the Catholics of the district would do their utmost to liquidate the debt. There was another large attendance at the church for the evening service. Very Rev. Dean Gillan officiated at Vespers. This was followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, at which Very Rev. Monsignor O'Reilly was celebrant. St. Benedict's choir, under the conductorship of Mr. S. Jackson, assisted at the service. Mrs. Jackson acted as organist. The subscriptions received during the afternoon brought the total amount up to £75. Mass was celebrated at the church this morning by Very Rev. Dean Gillan. For the future Mass will be celebrated there regularly, possibly once every two or three weeks, more frequent services at present being impracticable, as the district is served from St. Benedict's.

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