

WHINNEY HEYS ROAD,  
BLACKPOOL, LANCASHIRE,  
FY3 8NP



TRADITION: ROMAN CATHOLIC

BUILT: 1955

CONGREGATION ACTIVE  
UNTIL: 1975

LISTING: GRADE II\*

OS GRID REFERENCE: SD332368

CATHOLIC THANKSGIVING SHRINE  
BUILT FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II

# SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES



## TRANSPORT

The Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes stands on Whinney Heys Road, close to Stanley Park and Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

Park in the hospital multi-storey car park further down Whinney Heys Road. Several bus routes from the centre of Blackpool to Victoria Hospital serve the Shrine, some stopping right outside. Blackpool North Station is about 2 miles away.

To arrange a visit contact [chapels@hct.org.uk](mailto:chapels@hct.org.uk)

## VISIT US

The key is available from the Chaplaincy at Victoria Hospital during normal office hours.

To arrange a group visit contact [chapels@hct.org.uk](mailto:chapels@hct.org.uk). WC facilities on site.

## HISTORY & BACKGROUND

Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of the Roman Catholic diocese of Lancaster in which the Shrine is located, the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes was built in thanksgiving to God for the relatively light bombing the diocese took during World War II.

The leading figure in its establishment was Thomas E. Flynn, the Bishop of Lancaster, who wrote in September 1945 that "as the danger [during the War] became more acute, and one diocese after another suffered terrible losses in life and property, I asked for earnest prayers to our patroness, Our Lady of Lourdes ... and we were marvellously spared. The thought was in my mind during that period of anxiety that after the war I should ask the diocese to make an offering to God to show our gratitude."

The construction of the church began in 1955, on land donated by local house builder William Eaves. The £59,000 cost was covered by subscriptions from every parish in the diocese. Blackpool was chosen for its central position in the Diocese and ease of access to visitors. The Shrine was designed by architect Francis Xavier Velarde, who worked on a number of Catholic churches in the North West of England. From its construction until 1968 the chapel was in the care of the Sisters of Adoration, whose convent was formerly next door. It passed to the hands of the Sisters of Marie before The Blessed Sacrament Fathers and Brothers took up residence as custodians of the Shrine in 1994. In 1999 the special Mission of the Shrine was relocated to St Wilfred's, Preston, and the chapel fell out of use.



Far left: Shrine interior view.

Left and overleaf: detail of the sculptures by David John.

## ENQUIRE & HIRE

THE SHRINE DOES NOT HAVE FIXED PEWS SO CAN BE USED FLEXIBLY FOR EXHIBITIONS, CONCERTS AND EVENTS

To find out more visit [www.hct.org.uk](http://www.hct.org.uk) or contact [chapels@hct.org.uk](mailto:chapels@hct.org.uk)

THE HISTORIC CHAPELS TRUST | ST. GEORGE'S GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
55 ALIE STREET, ALDGATE, LONDON E1 8EB, UK | REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1017321



### THE EXTERIOR

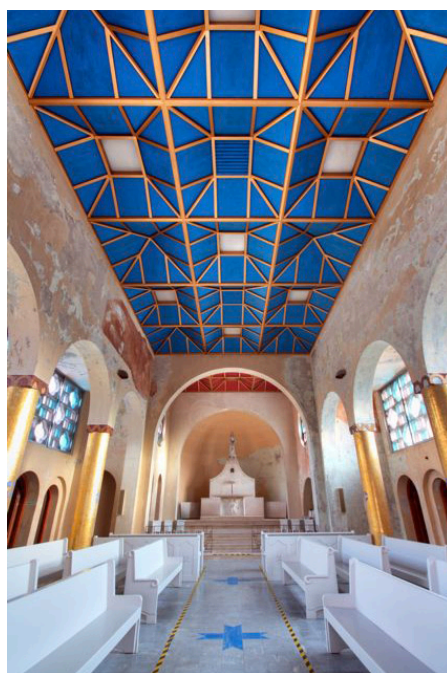
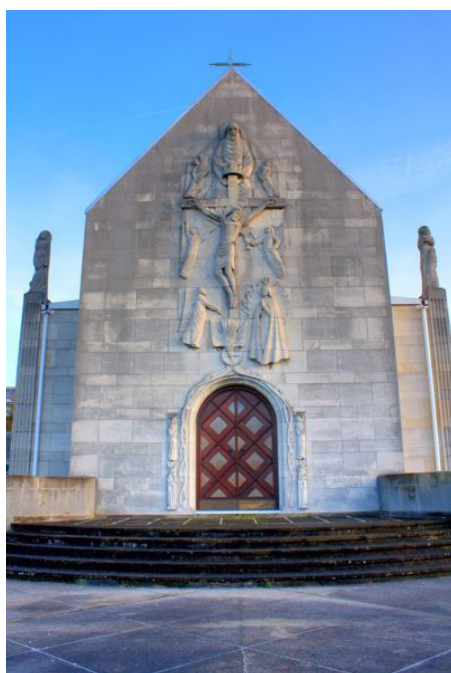
The Shrine is faced with Portland stone. The architecture of the building borrows freely from Spanish and German architectural motifs as well as the post-war style of architecture. The entrance steps are made from blue York stone inlaid with marble. The sculpture on the facade measures twenty-two feet by eleven feet, and was sculpted by David John. It portrays the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Behind the Cross in low relief carving sprout branches with leaves, symbolic of everlasting life made possible by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The roots of the tree trace their way around the main door, and are supported by the four Evangelists. There are four other statues carved by John into the pinnacles at each corner of the building, which depict the Virgin Mary appearing to St Bernadette and Christ appearing to St Margaret Mary, St Thomas of Canterbury and St Edward the Confessor respectively. The striking pink and pale-blue glass windows are made up of geometric tracery.

### THE INTERIOR

The nave has columns with geometric capitals supporting round arches, which are reminiscent of early Christian basilicas, as are the yellow mosaic cross shaped insets in the sanctuary floor. The columns are sheathed in gold mosaic – a trademark of Velarde. The coffered ceiling creates a three dimensional effect, and is painted bright blue and gold in the nave, red and gold in the sanctuary.

David John also carved the reredos and the altar in Gris Mouchete stone, brought from Burgundy. Above the reredos is a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, again carved by John. The raised sanctuary is separated from the main chapel by bronze railings in a modern-byzantine design featuring an abstracted chalice and wafer motif, reminiscent of the communion offered behind them.



### SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

The shrine was transferred to the Historic Chapels Trust in 2002. A first phase of repairs was completed in April 2008. This consisted of repairs to the leaking copper roof and re-designing a defective rainwater disposal system. The works cost £100,000. The buildings was re-wired in 2015 and fundraising has started to raise the £500,000 needed to complete the repairs and introduce facilities to ensure the building can host community activities.

### FURTHER READING

'Thanksgiving Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes',  
English Heritage, List entry 1387319

*Above: the golden columns and vivid blue coffered ceiling.*

*Left: The Holy Trinity relief sculpture by David John.*