

The Catholic Church of Our Lady Of Fatima Bala



The thriving market town of Bala, is a pretty tourist resort, surrounded by the Berwyn, Aran and Arenig Mountain ranges, and is set on the shores of Llyn Tegid, the largest natural lake in Wales.

Father James Koenen, a Dutch Dominican Priest, arrived in 1946 during World War II. We are told, at every Mass, the people prayed a Hail Mary with him, and asked Our Lady of Fatima to send them a Church. Father James, was a man of Faith, and he kept on encouraging them to pray. Not surprisingly, their prayers were answered, and Mary saw to it that they should have their Church, and, in the centre of the Town!

In November 1946, Father James learned that there was a property for sale, in the High Street, dating from 1609. It consisted of a large house, cafe, fish-and-chip shop and stables. Prior to this, the building was the "Onen Inn" where travellers stayed overnight and rested their horses.

The annals tell us that the conversion of the stables into a Church began in October 1947. Eight months of hard work followed.

Then Fr. James sought and gained permission from Bishop Petit, of Menevia Diocese, as it was called at the time, to dedicate his Church to Our Lady of Fatima. This was, in fact, the first Church outside of Portugal, to be dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima. It was also the first Catholic Church to be opened in Bala since the Reformation. So, on 15 June 1948, the Church of Our Lady of Fatima was opened with all the rejoicing and grandeur befitting such an historic occasion.

Later that year, a Portuguese donor provided a Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, for Bala. It was carved in oak, by the same sculptor who carved the Statue in the Fatima Basilica, in Portugal itself. It was especially blessed by the Bishop of Leira in Fatima, for all who come to pray in Bala. On 12 December, the Statue arrived by ship in Liverpool and was placed high on an open car decorated with flowers, and emblems as well as the flags of Wales and Portugal. The open car, carrying the Statue was followed by a cortege of white coaches, carrying pilgrims. Other pilgrims walked all the way to Bala! The Procession made its way through Chester, Wrexham & Llangollen all the way to Bala in the heart of Wales. On the edge of the town the Pilgrims walked in procession along the High Street, praying the Rosary, to the Church. This memorable event culminated with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and Our Lady had arrived to take up residence in her Welsh mountain home.



Today Pilgrimages to Bala have increased in number once more. The Millennium was marked in our Parish by the building of a small Shrine to Our Lady of Fatima, an extension to the side of the Church. It is constructed out of Welsh slate and has a beautiful stained-glass window, representing the miracle of the 'spinning sun' in Fatima, designed and made by a Loreto Sister, Jen Bromham, who came from Swansea.

Mike Watts from Blaenau Ffestiniog, was responsible for the design of the slate work and inscriptions in Welsh and English of Our Lady's words "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord".... on either side of the Shrine. The materials used were all Welsh, as was the Builder, Ellis Gwyn Jones. 8 December 2000 was a memorable Day, when, Priests from the Dioceses of Wrexham, Liverpool, Salford and Shrewsbury, together with hundreds of Pilgrims, assembled for the Blessing of the Shrine and to Concelebrate Mass. The Crown was restored to its former beauty and the youngest member of our Parish, Emma Roberts, Crowned Our Lady. The gift of a beautiful Rosary from the Pope, to mark this special occasion, was placed on the Statue.

Many might ask "Why have devotion to Our Lady of Fatima in Bala." History reminds us that Wales has always had a special devotion to Mary (Mair in Welsh). Many places are called after her. The story of Fatima reveals Mary's love and concern for all God's children and her 'Message', given to the three children in Fatima, is more relevant today than ever. Mary made an urgent appeal for Prayer, Reconciliation and Penance. So continuing Fr. James Koenen's mission, we are encouraging everyone who comes here, to listen to what Mary has requested us to do.

Daily Opening Times

8.30am to 6.00pm - Summer

10am to 4.00pm - Winter

The Eucharist is central to our Prayer-life.

Our Church is open daily for either the Celebration of Mass or Service of Word and Communion.

- For Private Prayer.
- For Days of Prayerful Renewal, which can be arranged for Groups of Pilgrims or Individuals.
- Weekly Ecumenical Prayer Groups
- Individual help with Prayer if desired (Not everyone can get away to a Retreat House for a Retreat.)
- We have the Devotions of the First Saturdays of the Month, as requested by Our Lady in Fatima i.e. The Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the Rosary. There is Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 11 a.m. onwards - 4 p.m.

Pilgrimages can be arranged by contacting Sister Patricia Lane at the Shrine. Or The Rev. Fr. Joshy Cheruparambil CMI at Our Lady Of Sorrows Catholic Church, Dolgellau. Tel - 01341-422805

Times of Masses

Sunday - 11.00am

Tuesday & Friday - 12.00 noon

The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be arranged on request

For further information, please write to Sister Patricia Lane IBVM at 67 High Street, Bala, Gwynedd. LL23 7AE.

Tel No. 01678 -520441.

E-mail

srpatricialane@googlemail.com

Website:

<http://ourladyoffatimabala.yolasite.com>



Location

We are situated in the High Street opposite Barclays Bank.

By road, follow the A5 from Llangollen and the A494 to Bala