



Fr. James Nugent

James Nugent was born on the 3rd March 1822 in Liverpool. Unlike so many in Liverpool at the time, his parents could afford to send him to school and they were hoping he would pursue a business career. However, James had a deep faith and wanted to be a Catholic priest. He went to study in Durham and Rome before being ordained a priest in St. Nicholas Church, Liverpool in 1846. His first year as a priest was, however, in Blackburn and that is where he met the Sisters of Notre Dame.

In 1847, Fr Nugent came back to his hometown and he realised that life in Liverpool was really hard for most people. Fr Nugent decided something needed to be done! In 1849, he opened a school in Copperas Hill to take homeless children off the street by giving them shelter, food and clothing. This became known as St. Nicholas Poor School. He saw education as a way for the children to climb out of poverty.

In 1851, he invited the Sisters of Notre Dame from Blackburn to come and help in the education of the poor children. By the 1860's, Fr Nugent was providing food and shelter for thousands of children and more and more schools were opened including the Boys Refuge Industrial School which taught boys trades so they could become more employable.

On 28th March, 1851 – the Sisters of Notre Dame arrived in Liverpool on the invitation of Fr Nugent.

He was so highly regarded that, a year after his death, a statue of Fr Nugent was unveiled in St. John's Gardens, near the Walker Art Gallery – which you can still see today!

At St. Julie's, Nugent has been given the colour blue in recognition of the various schools Fr Nugent set up in the Everton area of Liverpool.

Alongside the many schools and orphanages he started, Fr Nugent was chaplain at Walton Prison; he set up a home for mothers and their babies; he started and ran a newspaper; and he campaigned against the damage done by alcohol.

In 1881 – he set up the Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society – which later became known as Nugent Care and recently has been rebranded as simply Nugent!

Fr Nugent also pioneered child emigration to Canada and the USA – at a time when this was seen as giving these orphan children the chance of a new life. On one such trip, Fr Nugent – by now 83 years old – slipped and sustained a serious head injury and sight impairment. Shortly after, he contracted pneumonia and within six weeks, he died on 27th June, 1905!

Fr Nugent was a giant in the social history of Liverpool. He was a man of compassion and had considerable organisational skills. He was fantastic at persuading others to come and work with the poor.

The organisation Fr Nugent started – now called Nugent - has been in operation for over 130 years. They continue, in the spirit of Fr Nugent, providing residential accommodation for the vulnerable – both young and old - and education for children with the most challenging circumstances.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the example of Fr. Nugent.
We pray that we might, too, show compassion for the vulnerable
and live out our faith in word and action!

We pray this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.