

Mr. Michael Walker who has lived in Horsforth and attend St Mary's Church for over 50 years was recently been awarded a gold Diocesan Medal for his services to Church, Parish and Catholic life in the Parish & Diocese over the years.

Michael unfortunately had to retire from playing the organ at St Mary's church due to ill health in March 2020 just as the pandemic hit so we have not been able to recognise his commit to the parish and the wider community due to the restriction. His life has been steeped in the Catholic faith and church which we have listed below:

As a child Michael was an altar boy at St Anthony's Beeston and was involved in the drama society there. As a teenager, he played piano for the Polish Community in Leeds. Michael served 2 years in RAF before going to train to be at Strawberry Hill in Twickenham. He taught in a Catholic school in Twickenham for a couple of years before moving back to Leeds where he became head of Music at St Kevin's Secondary school and ran a jazz band and choir with the pupils.

He moved to Horsforth 51 years ago, taught at St Brendan's primary in Bradford and then at St Philip's in Middleton. He played for concerts and children's shows even after he left St Philip's to teach at Newlaithes school, Horsforth having taught for 23 years in Catholic schools. He took children to Music festivals in his own time and provided tuition to help children in the community who were preparing for exams. Michael taught Piano, clarinet and recorder throughout his career to pupils in school as an extra-curriculum activity.

He began to play the Organ at St Mary's 50 years ago. Initially he played at Sunday evening Mass but then played for early mass on Sunday at for the later Mass, wherever he was needed. He played for other services including Benediction and Stations of the Cross. He also played for special events such as concerts held at church by Leeds Guild of Singers. He played at funerals, wedding and Christenings, sometimes at very short notice whenever he was needed, he would be there to play the organ or piano.

He played for the Church choir and for community choirs including the male voice choir and choirs at The Willows and Aireborough.

For some time he travelled to Middleton for early Mass and the returned to play at St Mary's for second Mass. Michael would play when flower arrangers were preparing the church for Easter and Christmas.

Whenever he was needed he would be there. If he made a commitment, it was total. He wouldn't let anyone down and continued to play the organ at Mass even when his daughter was terminally ill. Playing the organ for Mass was very important to him.

He also played the organ/ piano for the Verona Fathers and for Trinity University chaplaincy for the last 15 years. He has played at the prison to assist another of our parishioners, Hilary Taylor.

He played the Organ for weddings, funerals and other family occasions at other churches and crematoriums in the diocese/city.

He taught young people to play the organ. He wrote music for Children's Easter plays. He assisted the priest and the community with music in whatever way he could, at the drop of a hat.

And Michael would do all of this with a smile.

The Parish & the Diocese thank you for all you have done.