

# Blessed Robert Grissold Catholic Church

## Christmas 2011 Newsletter

A COMMUNITY BASED ON WORD, ALTAR AND CHARITY



### \* Father Soji Writes \*

*Each newsletter, our parish priest, Father Soji writes a message to our parishioners, friends and visitors to our parish.*

It is the time of thanksgiving and rejoicing again. A time when we look to Our Father in heaven with gratitude to say 'thank you' for sending His only Son to save us all from sin. If Jesus had not come into this world, there would be no redemptive sacrifice that was paid on the cross for our salvation.

But Jesus did come for us as foretold by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi. In this Advent season, we commemorate His birth – God taking a human form to live amongst us and show us how much He loved us. He was born for a divine purpose- to reconcile us to God; but there was no room for Him at the inn for His birth; there was room for Him only on the cross. Had the innkeeper known he was about to receive the King of the universe, he would have made all

the arrangements to make room for the Holy family. That leaves us with the thought that we must make enough room for Jesus to enter into our hearts this Christmas season.

In the gospel of Luke, we read how the angels of heaven heralded the happy news of the Saviour to the shepherds. On receiving the news from the angels, the shepherds hurried to meet the promised Messiah and on meeting their Saviour, they went out to tell people about baby Jesus. And this is the true message of Christmas- to tell the world about our Saviour. Jesus was born with a mission and purpose. This Christmas, let us all be part of that mission and plan. Let Jesus be born again in our hearts and in the lives of our dear and near ones.

As we prepare to celebrate this Christmas together as a parish, I thank

God for your generous support, active participation, and kind cooperation. May this Christmas be a time of sharing, peace and joy in our families and among our friends.

My prayer for all in our Parish this Christmas is that our Lord Jesus will give each one of us the grace and strength we need to continue in our Parish and community. May baby Jesus give us the grace to make peace, rejoice, and love one another and walk forward together into the New Year.

I wish you all a very blessed and Happy Christmas and God's choicest blessings upon you and your family in the New Year.

Lovingly,

Fr. Soji Olikkal

### FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS AND CONFIRMATIONS

Classes to prepare children to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion will begin in January 2012. If you have a child who is in year 3 or above at a non-Catholic school who would like to prepare to receive these sacraments, please contact Ellie Clarke. Further details will be available through the weekly bulletins and on the website.



A group of five young people have also begun preparation for the Sacrament of

Confirmation. They made their 'commitment' to the Sacrament at a special Mass on the 11th December in front of their friends, families and the parish. They are looking forward to the rest of the preparation programme and the end result, their Confirmation by Bishop Kenny in April 2012.

Ellie Clarke & Teresa Green

## CATENIAN ASSOCIATION

The Catenian Association provides practicing Catholic laymen and their families with friendship, social activities and support. It has more than 10,000 members in the UK, Ireland, Malta, Australia, Africa and India.

This year has seen a significant increase in the number of gentlemen from our parish joining the Association. Spurred on by our own Joe Martin's presidency of the Leamington Spa circle, Ian Clarke, Stefan Hunka and Chris Burleigh have joined Leamington circle. They join existing members of the Solihull Circle: Godfrey Cheshire and Dominic O'Brien; and Danny O'Reilly, Bob Jones and Tony Cotterill all from Coventry circle.

This Summer, our church hosted the Leamington Circle President's Mass at which our choir sang and afterwards, our parishioners and Catenian guests enjoyed a sumptuous buffet lunch.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the Catenians, please contact one of the gentlemen above.

## HCPT GROUP 83



It may only just be Christmas, but in group 83 we are already thinking about Easter! My first pilgrimage as group leader was wonderful, but it seems like such a long time ago now. We are busy making lots of preparations for the next pilgrimage, organising the numbers in the group and planning activities for our week in Lourdes.

In November we watched the film *The Song of Bernadette* which gave many of the helpers, as well as some of our supporters, a greater insight into the life of Bernadette and why Lourdes is such a special place. Maureen also held a coffee evening which raised a fantastic £855.87.

The support of the parish at these events is greatly appreciated by the group as without it we would not get to Lourdes. I would like to thank you all for your continued support and wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas.

Ann-Marie

## MILLENNIUM PROJECT

Since Easter we have held 3 'Breakfasts' which including donations, raised £645. Our sales of Peruvian handicrafts added a further £320 and



we have counted £90 from our 'Bottle' giving a total of £1055. We sent Fr Ed £200 before Easter making our donation for this year £1255 which will have a spending power of around £6200 in Peru.

Fr Ed has recently sent us photographs showing the Nutrition Project for young children and the Project to help reduce Family Violence. These are displayed in the Parish room. A CD showing some of this work is also available if anyone would like to borrow it. The money we send to Fr Ed is going to help these projects and improve the lives of the families in San Benito.

We have just had our 46th 'Breakfast' and by this time next year we may have reached our 50th! A big thank you goes to everyone in the Parish for your continued generosity and support.

Sue McGovern

## THE ALPHA COURSE 2012

Autumn 2012 will be an exciting moment for the Parish community at Blessed Robert Grissold as it embarks on holding its first ever Alpha Course.

The Alpha course is a practical and accessible overview of the Christian faith. It is a low-pressure, fun and informative course where participants can relax, share thoughts and explore the meaning of life. The course is suitable for all: non-church goers, new Christians, practicing Christians and those who have lapsed in their faith.

The Alpha course was developed in the Anglican parish of Holy Trinity Brompton, London in the late 1970's. It was designed as an educational course for the parish to strengthen knowledge of the Christian faith. In 1990 the Holy Trinity clergyman Nicky Gumbel saw the potential of the course and adapted it to make it inclusive for anyone interested in the Christian faith. Alpha is supported by all the major denominations and from early on,

Alpha has been run in Catholic parishes. The course material is wholly compatible with catholic teaching. Most courses are held in the Autumn, as a run up to Christmas.

The course runs over 10 weeks and involves 1 evening per week of about 2½ hours duration (7-9.30pm). Each session involves a light meal and then a talk on a subject central to the Christian faith followed by a group discussion. The subjects covered by the talks cover key questions like:

Is there more to life? Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus Die? Why and How do I pray? How does God guide us?

The Parish Council has decided to hold a course at Blessed Robert Grissold starting at the end of September and running to the end of November 2012. More information will follow during 2012 but in the meantime, make a note in your diary and spread the word. Anyone interested in attending should put their name and contact details down on the list on the notice board in the church entrance hall or contact David Green on 01564 775155 for more information. More information on Alpha can be obtained on [www.alpha.org](http://www.alpha.org) and at <http://uk-england.alpha.org/catholic-context/catholic-context-home>

David Green

## HARVEST FESTIVAL

Our Harvest Festival was held in Sunday mass on 9th October. As in previous years, parishioners were asked to mark the event by bringing donations of tinned and packet food, clothing and toiletries. Many families had decorated the boxes containing their donations, which were brought up during the offertory procession by the children and young people of the church.

The gifts were very gratefully received by SFIA Fireside – in Birmingham, a charity which works with those who are homeless or socially excluded to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing. Your donations will be put to very good use to help some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

## BACON BAPS BREAKFAST

The gentlemen of the parish demonstrated some of their culinary skills by serving bacon baps along with teas and coffees after mass on Sunday 30th October.

The delicious breakfast was enjoyed by old and young alike, a raised a tasty £78 for parish finances!

### OLDER PARISHIONERS GET TOGETHER



We meet each month on the first Wednesday morning for coffee and a chat or occasionally soup and a roll.

During the summer we visited Baddesley Clinton House and also celebrated Ruth Windybanks' 90th birthday when daughter Jean Henser provided a tasty lunch and games.

In September, 12 of us had a meal in Ye Olde Saracen's Head with Oscott Seminarian Linh Nguyen joining in the fun. November found us buying up Melbicks! We finished 2011 on a high note celebrating Rose Doyle's 90th birthday.

Judith Gibbs

### PARISH CURRY NIGHT



Our annual curry night took place on 24th September as part of our drive to raise funds for the church. After watching dancing from the Keralan young people we enjoyed 4 courses of delicious Indian food.

A special thank you to the Kerala community for arranging all of the food for our Curry Night last week. We raised £659.10 toward Parish funds. Thank you all who helped and supported this wonderful evening.

### KERALAN NEWS

Our Parish has received a number of visits from India since Easter. On 3rd July, Father Sebastian returned briefly to the UK for a visit and celebrated mass. On 24th July, we were visited by the Rt Revd Paul Alappat, Bishop of the new Diocese of Ramanathapuram who celebrated mass and made an appeal for donations to support his work in India. In August, the Revd Dr Augustine Vallooran from Divine

Retreat Centre, celebrated Mass and preached the word of God. This included saying the Rosary, followed by praise and worship, a Spiritual talk, the Healing Mass and finished with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Bishop George Njaralakat, from Mandya Diocese also visited our parish on the 16th October and celebrated mass.

A retreat for members of the Keralan community was held in our church on the weekend of 3rd and 4th December and during Advent this year, night vigils were held in the sacristy every night during December from 10pm to 5.30am.

### FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

In November we welcomed Peter Rand to our parish to give a talk about the Friends of the Holy Land during Sunday Mass. Peter writes: "The FHL is a national charity with its HQ in Kenilworth, supporting the plight of the Christians in the Holy Land. On behalf of the Christians, our objectives are to increase awareness of their challenges, to pray for their intentions, to generate financial resources and to encourage visits to the Holy Land." Our second collection for this cause raised £237.01. Thank you for your generosity

### WORLD YOUTH DAY MADRID 2011



In August, I had the privilege of representing our parish at World Youth Day. It was a truly amazing experience as I had the chance to meet and pray with so many young Catholics from different countries. The first five days were spent in a place called Valladolid, where we were fully immersed into the Spanish culture. We visited lots and lots of beautiful churches, each one more impressive than the next. However, relaxation time was needed too, this was really enjoyable as we were able to explore and experience new things; such as going on a trip to watch a local bull fight, flamenco lessons and having the chance to try new and different Spanish foods and cultural traditions.

The rest of the trip was spent in Madrid where we attended Catechesis

concerts and celebrated mass every day. This was one of the highlights of the trip as I have never celebrated mass with 300 priests, 150 bishops and a congregation made up of thousands of young people. Furthermore, even though I was not lucky enough to physically see Pope Benedict, we saw him many times on the large screens at different events. However, I was still able to feel a real sense of belonging and it highlighted that no matter where you are, (in the middle of an airfield, in the scorching heat for 2 days to celebrate mass with the Pope) if you have your faith it is enough to worship and celebrate the Lord's presence.

Thank you for giving generously and making this once in a lifetime experience possible for me.

Emily Green

### MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

In November 2011 Father Soji and David & Monica Green attended a Marriage Encounter weekend at Belmont Abbey in Herefordshire. They had a great experience and wished to share a little of it in this newsletter.

Marriage Encounter is a worldwide movement within the Catholic Church. It began in the 1960's in America and today is in over 100 countries worldwide. 2012 will mark the movement's 40th anniversary in England & Wales.

Marriage Encounter is centered around a weekend away course which provides married couples an opportunity to take time out of their busy lives to deepen and explore their relationships with one another, to refocus on the values that are really important in life, and to help them enjoy their relationships to the full. It promotes strong communication and explores the past, present and the future within the relationship. It can be a truly revitalising experience. The weekend is also designed for Priests to help them explore their relationships with their communities and to renew their vows.

Separate weekends are also available for engaged couples, and these can provide an excellent marriage preparation experience.

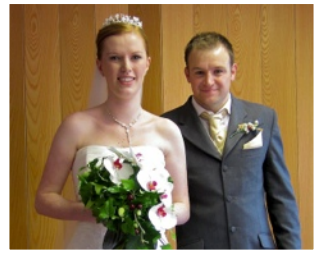
For more information please speak to Father Soji, parishioners David & Monica Green or Bysshe & Judith Gibbs or look at [www.wvme.org.uk](http://www.wvme.org.uk) Leaflets are also available in the parish room with dates for 2012 weekends!

David Green

## PARISH QUIZ NIGHT

Brains were boggled on Saturday 17th November at the annual Parish Quiz night. Several teams battled it out in a closely-fought contest to prove who was the real brains of Blessed Robert Grissold Church! Half way through the teams enjoyed a supper of sausages, beans and jacket potatoes before tackling the remaining rounds, including the fiendishly difficult General Ignorance round. A grand total of £603 was raised for parish funds – many thanks to everyone who helped and to all who attended.

## BIRTHS & MARRIAGES



Since Easter, two couples have been married in our church. Congratulations to Martin Cowling and Frances Rogan who were married on 21st May and to Katherine Ann Selby and Lee Ryder who were married on 3rd September.

Five babies have also been baptised since Easter. Welcome to Daniel McDermott who was baptised on 24th July, David Doyle on 31st July, George Ronald Steven Wicks on 7th August and baby Megan (granddaughter of Joe and Pam Martin) on the 27th November. Finally, James Michel Peter Murtagh was baptised on 18th December.

We also welcome Emerita Milagro Chesshire-Ramon who was born on 16th August, Jennifer Frances Stewart born on 28th August and Benjamin James Chesshire who was born on 23rd September.

## *Parish Life Easter to Christmas 2011*

The pictures below are moments from the life of our Parish since Easter 2011.



## *Blessed Robert Grissold Roman Catholic Church*

Meeting House Lane, Balsall Common

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**Parish Priest:** Father John Sharp, The Presbytery, Rising Lane, Baddesley Clinton, Knowle, Solihull, B93 ODD

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Sunday Mass is celebrated at 9.30am, Weekday Mass on Tuesdays at 7.30pm and first Friday of each month at 9.15am. Mass on Holydays is at 7.30pm. Fr Soji hears confessions from 8.30am to 9.00am every Sunday. Registered as Charity No. 234216

[www.brgparish.org.uk](http://www.brgparish.org.uk)

Next Newsletter published Easter 2012. Any contributions or comments, email Ian Clarke on [newsletter@brgparish.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@brgparish.org.uk)