



# Blessed Robert Grissold Catholic Church

## Warwick Deanery Visitation Parish Report 2020

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The 2020 Visitation of Warwick Deanery has come at a special time for the community of Blessed Robert Grissold Church. We celebrated, in 2019, the 25th anniversary of the building of our church. The building stands on the site of the previous Catholic church, St Philomena's and was constructed over the summer and autumn of 1994, with the first Mass in the new building being celebrated on Christmas Day of that year. A number of those attending Mass on Christmas Day last year were also present at that first mass 25 years ago.

As the church community reflects and gives thanks for the blessings of the last 25 years, we also have the opportunity to take stock of our current sacramental life and other activities, and to look towards the future of our church as part of the Warwick deanery and as part of the wider community in this area.

Many parishioners actively contribute to one or more aspects of the life of the church. Some are involved in the more visible aspects of the celebration of the mass as readers, musicians, altar servers or Eucharistic ministers; others play a part in the less visible, but also important duties such as keeping the building clean and well-maintained, coordinating charitable activities, or organising social or fund-raising events.

As priest to the community at Blessed Robert Grissold I am grateful for the support of an active and diligent laity, with so many people giving of their time, talent and energy to ensure a witness to Christ in this place and in the wider community. It is my hope that, during this Visitation, we will be able to present Bishop William with a faithful impression of our Parish.

Father Frank Smith.  
Parish Priest

12th February 2020.

# The Parish in summary



95

Average Sunday Mass attendance



90

Laity actively support the parish

Sacraments		8 Baptisms in 2019		6 First Holy Communions in 2020
		5 Confirmations in 2019		1 Wedding in 2019



292

Average monthly visits to parish website



£3330

Average monthly income

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£1830

Average monthly Gift Aided donations

# 2 Sacramental Life

90 members of the parish play an active role in fulfilling a ministry within our Church

- Our church is well supported by parishioners willing to assist Father Frank in ensuring the smooth running of the parish. 90 members of the parish are involved in one or more of our rotas including 11 people who provide flower arrangements for the church, 28 who act as wardens and welcome people as they arrive, 17 who clean our church and 20 who provide refreshments after mass. Outside of Mass, 4 parishioners take it in turns to produce our weekly bulletin, and 2 ensure our website is updated. 12 parishioners are organised into teams of two to count our collections.
- We also have parishioners who support the sacramental life of the parish. We have 14 active Ministers of the Eucharistic who support Father Frank in the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ and conduct Eucharistic Services when required. They also take Communion to sick and housebound parishioners each week in addition to visits from Father Frank. The age profile of the congregation means that this ministry to the sick/housebound is expected to increase in the future.
- Our number of altar servers has dropped in recent years but we still have 4 altar servers, who serve each Sunday and a master of ceremonies to ensure Father Frank is supported during Christmas and Easter services. A further 30 parishioners make up our team who support the Liturgy of the Word at Mass each Sunday and during the week.
- We also have a long standing musical tradition in our church. Our 15-strong choir has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary and provides music throughout the church year. We have 2 organists (rising to 3 in September 2020) who accompany our congregation. Finally, our long standing instrumental group of 5 musicians provides congregational accompaniment twice a month.
- We hold a carol service annually which is well attended. This consists of readings, congregational carols and choral music. When the number of children and youth permits, we organise a twice yearly Youth Mass where we encourage the younger members of the parish to read, sing, play instruments and be part of the offertory procession.
- Father Frank is also supported by a number of committees to ensure the church is well run. Our maintenance committee of 6 parishioners ensures the church building and environs are well cared for. Our finance committee of 6 parishioners works with Father Frank to ensure we spend our income wisely and our parish council of 8 parishioners helps Father Frank to manage the parish effectively.
- When we celebrate special occasions, such as the Consecration of our church or our young people celebrating their First Holy Communion or receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, the whole parish becomes involved to ensure the event is a success.



# 3 Social Outreach

We have strong ties with Churches Together in Balsall, Berkswell and with St. George and St. Teresa's Primary School

- Our parish is a member of Churches Together in Balsall and Berkswell, an ecumenical organisation that promotes Christianity through shared worship. We share services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, World Day of Prayer, Good Friday, Remembrance Sunday, and One World Week (the latter including a guest speaker, followed by supper). The Lent Breakfasts are particularly well attended. Taking place in the Methodist Church, churches take turns to host the breakfast prior to a talk and question and answer session with a guest speaker. This year's topic will be 'New visions for the future of Christianity: Moving forward by looking back'. Young people in the parish have taken part in activities with those in the other parishes.
- Our older parishioners and their friends meet monthly at our church for a 'Get Together'. Attendance has been slowly growing and we now have about 15 people each month. The group organises 'tea, a cake and a chat' each month and also trips out to interesting places during the summer months.
- Our church encourages children from the parish to attend St George and St Teresa Roman Catholic Primary School. St George and St Teresa has appointed a Link Governor who regularly attends Mass at our church, to communicate with both St George and St Teresa's school and our parish. This also extends to St Peter's Secondary School, for which St George and St Teresa is a feeder school. Both schools' newsletters are available for parishioners to explore.
- The new chair of governors for St George and St Teresa, Mrs Liz Moloney, attended our last Confirmation Mass and the blessing of our new stained glass window to commemorate our 25th anniversary. Both she and the new headteacher, Mrs Nicola Wright, will attend our parish council meeting in the near future. Children from both schools attend Mass at our church regularly and are also altar servers.
- Whilst the links between the school and our parish are becoming stronger, the cancellation of the Solihull Borough provided school bus in 2017 has led to some families choosing not to attend the school and their children not benefiting from a Catholic education. Despite this, we believe that the future does look encouraging.
- Our parish website, found at [www.brgparish.org.uk](http://www.brgparish.org.uk), is well used by both parishioners and local residents. It provides easy access to our weekly newsletters and comprehensive details of parish events. It is one of the main ways in which those who do not regularly worship are able to contact Father Frank. Our website also serves as an archive of photographs taken at parish events, our podcasts and shares special events, such as the consecration of the church in 2018 and our 25th anniversary in 2019, with the wider community.
- We publish a full colour Christmas newsletter each year that is distributed at our Christmas Masses. Attendance at these Masses is typically much higher than at our normal weekly Masses and our newsletter is an essential part of showcasing our parish to the those who may be persuaded to worship with us more regularly. Our Christmas 2019 newsletter celebrated the 25th anniversary of our church and contained memories from long-standing parishioners and photographs from parish life over that period.



# 4 Formation

We have an active faith formation in our parish and extending into the wider Catholic community.

- Attendance at our Sunday Mass is growing and we are blessed by a healthy proportion of young families and children. Mass is also celebrated during the week. Every Thursday there is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by teaching and meditations. Every first Friday, a Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ is offered. This devotion is especially significant for our parish because, at the recent Consecration of our church, a relic of St Margaret Mary was placed in the altar. On the last Thursday of every month the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is offered within the Mass.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available on Sundays before Mass and by appointment. There are also opportunities for Confession through the Penitential Services held in Advent and Lent. Marian devotions include the Rosary being prayed by the Eucharistic community during the months of May and October. Stations of the Cross are prayed weekly during Lent.
- The parish runs a children's liturgy every Sunday during the school term. Children are welcomed at the start of Mass then go to the hall for their own liturgy, returning at the Offertory. The number of children has increased over the last year to an average of 10 children each week. The children participate in activities based on the theme of the Mass of the day which includes reading the Gospel and discussing how they can link the Gospel to their daily lives and spread the word of God by their actions.
- The Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation are special highlights of our parish calendar, bringing the parish together in celebration. Preparation for the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation are each led by 2 Catechists and usually takes place every 2 years. During preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the young people prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by understanding the importance of being able to say 'sorry' both to God and to those around them if they do something wrong. The focus then shifts to the Mass itself and to the Consecration as the young people are taught that the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Our preparation for Confirmation is very interactive and encourages discussion so all can contribute their ideas and opinions. We instil an understanding of the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit; how we recognise them in ourselves and others and how to incorporate them into our daily lives. We encourage the confirmandi to think deeply about the subject we are discussing and articulate their thoughts. Throughout preparation, we stress that Confirmation is about making the choice to become adult members of the Church and it is their choice to continue their faith in our Catholic community.
- There are additional opportunities for faith formation in teaching courses which are run during Advent and Lent and opportunities for evangelisation and catechesis in the preparation for Baptism and Marriage and through ministering to families who have suffered bereavement. Further opportunities for evangelisation and catechesis occur during Father Frank's involvement with local schools. He offers a chaplaincy service to St Peter's Catholic secondary school in Solihull providing weekday Masses, celebrating Feast Days and end of term Masses and hearing Confessions. He also has links with the local primary school of St George and St Teresa where he hears Confessions.



# 5 Safeguarding

- We follow the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy.
- We have 12 adults who support the Children's Liturgy. In line with our Safeguarding Policy, we have 2 people on the rota each week, all of whom are DBS checked by the Diocese. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children if they are very young or insecure about attending Children's Liturgy on their own.
- Our safeguarding representative is Monica Green, and she has put the Diocesan poster with her name and contact details at the back of the church.
- Father Frank is also mentioned on that poster as somebody people can contact if they have any questions.
- Monica attended her last training session in 2018, and replies to the Diocese's survey every year. She keeps the Safeguarding folder up to date and this is kept in the safe at church.
- She organises the DBS checks for all parish members working with children or vulnerable adults, and keeps a list of consent for photographs from children and their parents.
- She is hoping to attend an update on her safeguarding training from the Diocese in 2020.
- Monica is also a GP and in this role, she is the Safeguarding lead at her GP practice so attends a minimum of 5 hours Safeguarding adults and children training per year.
- She feels confident in dealing with Safeguarding concerns. We have fortunately not had any Safeguarding disclosures from this Parish as far as we are aware.

# 6 Bereavement Project

- Parishioner Tracey McAtamney is the driving force behind Surviving Bereavement - a project which aims to provide support and information to those who are dealing with the death of a loved one.
- Along with her team, Tracey runs regular seminar sessions which provide a combination of practical information, personal experience and a support network to help those who have been bereaved.
- The team will offer advice on every aspect of dealing with loss - from legal and financial matters to understanding the emotions of bereavement,
- The project also provides "memory boxes" free-of-charge to children in bereaved families, with support and guidance of how to use them.
- The launch of the seminar programme follows on from the release of Tracey's book, Hidden Strength, telling her own story of the loss of her husband, the challenges she and her sons faced, and how she found the resilience to cope with the difficult situations and emotions that bereavement can create.

# 7 Supporting Charities

We support several charities including CAFOD, the Teddies Trust, HCPT and our 'Millennium Project' supporting Fr. Ed in Peru

- Our parishioners donate over £800 each year to CAFOD. Collections are organised by our CAFOD representative, Chris Lynn. The money we have raised has supported the construction of toilets for the poorest families in Sierra Leone and the provision of emergency food and safe, clean water to starving families affected by the food crisis in Zimbabwe after last year's harvests failed. Our donations have also been used to support Syrian refugees in Lebanon who have fled the violence in Syria. More than 80% of these refugees are women and children.
- The parish has also recently supported the Teddies Trust. With the parish's help, the Teddies Trust was able to send 10,000 teddies to Syria on the 27th of November. The teddies arrived by Christmas for the children that the charity supports. Since 2015, the Teddies Trust has sent out teddies to children who have suffered severe trauma or abuse in South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Fiji and Romania and to refugee camps in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Kurdistan and Greece.
- Our long-standing support for HCPT Group 83 continues. The parish holds a coffee evening in the church hall twice a year to raise funds for young people to join Group 83 on a pilgrimage to Lourdes each Easter. The last coffee evening raised nearly £1400 and offset the travel costs of several young people.
- In 1998 the idea of a project to celebrate the new millennium was first discussed. As Columban Father Ed O'Connell had recently returned to Lima, it was decided that we would assist him financially with the various projects he had undertaken. These were particularly focussed on helping women and children in a poor part of Lima called San Benito. In 2019, through a combination of collecting loose change in a giant Coca Cola bottle and two millennium breakfasts after Sunday Mass, we have raised over £500.
- Our parish has also supported the Coventry Refugee & Migrant Centre through donation and gifts of winter clothing. The charity's wide range of services includes support for housing, finding work, accessing benefits and immigration advice. The Advice Team also advises on Immigration Tribunals, access to free school meals, resolving debt and signposting legal help. Sometimes, just a kindly listener and advice-giver is enough to help these refugees and migrants through the most difficult times.
- Each year the collection at our carol service is donated to the Friends of the Holy Land.
- Over the last few years, as the economic climate has worsened and more and more families rely on food banks to feed themselves, the parish has supported the charity Helping Hands with donations of food and essential toiletries. Helping Hands provides care packages to those in financial need across the local area.
- Each Christmas the young people of the parish decorate a Giving Tree with gift tags, inviting parishioners to donate Christmas presents to children and young people in Father Hudson's Homes. The response is always generous and we are able to take many boxes of gifts to the charity each Christmas.



# 8 Church Fundraising

We hold fundraising events during the year to support the costs of maintaining our parish and to celebrate our anniversary

- Our parish recognises the importance of active fund raising. Much of the essential church maintenance and improvements required would not be possible without the generosity of parishioners and their friends whilst attending our annual programme of fundraising events.
- In 2018 and 2019 we organised two summer concerts, Choral Energy and Choral Sparks, in conjunction with 'Gridtones', the National Grid workplace choir. These concerts featured our choir and the Gridtones, performing separately and together, and other singers and musicians from the parish. Choral Sparks also featured St Augustine's Catholic Primary School band for their first 'gig'. Each concert raised over £1000 and this was split between church funds and National Grid's chosen charity.
- Every year we hold a parish quiz and supper which is well attended by parishioners with friends and families. Competition is fierce and each quiz raises a much needed £600 - £800 for parish funds.
- The gentlemen of the parish also organise an annual pancake 'eggstravaganza' preceding the start of Lent. This is held in the parish room after Sunday Mass and is greatly appreciated by the parishioners, particularly the children! Last year, this event raised approximately £200 for parish funds.
- Twice a year, we also hold Cakes and "Goodies" sales - usually during the summer and just before Advent. Cakes, preserves and chutneys are made and donated by parishioners and are sold in our parish room after Mass, raising around £250.
- The highlight of our annual fundraising is usually our parish meal where a dedicated team of parishioners providing guests with a three course meal. The guests often dress up for the occasion to reflect the theme chosen. The meal is followed by games and entertainment provided by our parish musicians. This event usually raises around £1000.
- Our 100 Club is also a valued way of raising funds for our church, it has 85 members and draws take place quarterly for 3 cash prizes. In 2019 it raised £675. We are currently renewing subscriptions and recruiting new members for 2020.
- Our Christmas raffle is another fundraising highlight of the year. Parishioners and local businesses donate valuable prizes and the whole community is encouraged to sell tickets to friends and family. The draw takes place in the parish room after Mass on the last Sunday before Christmas and raises approximately £1000 per year.
- In 2019, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the construction of our church by commissioning a new stained glass window. The window has a Eucharistic theme to complement our existing windows, on either side of the altar, with the themes of Baptism and Confirmation. An appeal was made to parishioners and the project was entirely funded through their donations with dedications to families and deceased loved ones recorded on a plaque to the right of the window. The window was blessed by Bishop William Kenney as part of our Confirmation mass on 3rd November 2019. The window's creator, glass artist Sasha Ward was also in attendance.



# 9 Parish Finances

Our parish is managing to meet its financial responsibilities, through continued donations, whilst maintaining and repairing our church building

- Our finances are well controlled by the finance committee which meets three times a year.
- The year of 2019 was dominated by the cost of Father Smith moving house and this resulted in a deficit of £10,000 for the year. Fortunately, this extra, one-off cost was offset by a surplus from the previous year arising from the rental income from our investment property from which we had built up a good cash balance.
- Now that the move has been completed, we expect to lose the benefit of the rental income resulting in a significant reduction in our overall parish income.
- We have 66 Gift Aid donors in the parish which represents approximately 60% of those who attend mass regularly, some of which are ineligible as they no longer pay tax. Approximately £22,000 donations per annum are gift aided allowing us to recover over £7,000 in tax paid per annum. Due to extra fund raising in the current financial year the recovery is expected to be higher.
- Recognising that there are some more parishioners who do not “gift aid” but could do so and newcomers who may be persuaded, we intend to hold a recruitment drive in the new tax year.
- Our average income per year is approximately £40,000 which is matched by average expenditure, if we exclude one-off costs. We have a very generous congregation who always respond well to requests for financial support.
- This was demonstrated in 2019 when Ian Clarke had the inspiration to celebrate our 25th anniversary year by commissioning a new stained glass window to replace the plain glass window by the church entrance. He suggested that it would be fitting if the cost could be covered by donations from members of the parish. The response was tremendous. Over 30 parishioners provided donations that covered the cost of the new window and an additional £1200 with which we are intending to purchase new vestments.
- In addition to regular giving, we receive good income from our 100 Club, Christmas raffle, parish events and sales of cakes and goods donated by our parishioners. We also make significant contributions to the Columban Fathers in Peru, and support HCPT Group 83.
- In the last few years, we have needed to replace the failing boilers in the church and hall, replace the carpet in the parish room and down both side of the church, renovate the kitchen and purchase a dish washer. We expect further replacements and renewals to be necessary in the future. Our last full quinquennial report was five years ago and is due again in April 2020.
- Our church has been broken into twice in the last 6 months. We have had to have new locks fitted to all external doors and special locks fitted to the fire doors at each side of the altar. We are awaiting final quotes for the replacement of the main doors that were damaged during the break in and other work prior to submitting our insurance claim.
- Whilst we have prepared a budget for the coming year we are very conscious that our parish levies will be increased. We will be asking our parishioners to increase their planned giving to ensure we retain a surplus.



# Blessed Robert Grissold Catholic Church

Meeting House Lane, Balsall Common, Coventry CV7 7FX

Parish Priest: Father Frank Smith, Tel: 07512 100 908 Email: [parishpriest@brgparish.org.uk](mailto:parishpriest@brgparish.org.uk)  
[www.brgparish.org.uk](http://www.brgparish.org.uk) Registered as Charity No. 234216