

## UPDATE ON THE PARISH LIBRARY 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2011

Norbert Bonnici, Parish Librarian



Thanks to the regular donations, the Parish Library has grown to almost its physical limits. Even during the recent 'Life in the Spirit' Seminars a married couple from outside the parish donated 6 books, four of which from the Burns & Oates 'Faith & Fact' series of the late '50s and early '60s which include translations of European texts which made a great contribution to Christian Literature. For example '*Biblical Criticism*' by Abbé Jean Skinmann, attached to the Church of Notre-Dame in Paris, is an excellent introduction to the subject, very readable and traces the history of biblical studies from Origin to the late nineteen fifties. All the books are in excellent condition and their age is in fact an advantage because the quality of paper is often superior to many modern books and more care was taken with binding that lasts, often stitching the pages instead of simply gluing and pressing the book spine.

The Library is not made up only or mostly of old books, however excellent they are. There are hundreds of modern books, many from the late nineties up to 2011. The variety of subjects is immense, and there are also secular books which are sure to appeal to parishioners who want to deepen their knowledge not only of religious subjects but other serious secular subjects. For example, I recently catalogued 180 books, and besides giving them a subject number and colour coding according to the Parish Library system, I gave them a "Top Shelf" location, not because their subject is 'naughty' but because the top shelf was the only place left to accommodate them!

Among these books you will find a copy of Vera Brittain's '*Testament of Youth*' (first published in the twenties) and her daughter's autobiography, '*Climbing the Bookshelves*' by Shirley Williams (2009)(18.96 Top Shelf classmark) which I heartily recommend, although due to Health & Safety rules I have to dissuade readers from doing what Shirley Williams's father encouraged her to do as a child (hence the title of her autobiography) – to climb the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves using no ladder or stool! A safe step-ladder is provided in the Library for reaching the higher shelves.

There is a spread of subjects on the top shelf that mirrors the 18 sections of the Library. For example at 18.35 you will find '*Christian Deviations*' by Horton Davies (1967) which is only 138 pages long but covers succinctly most of the modern movements and explains any heretical or plain illogical and dangerous aspects of these movements, such as Mormons, Seven Day Adventists, and Christian Scientists. I found it the best book at explaining what's wrong with these movements from the Catholic point of view and can be read in a few hours. I re-discovered it on my shelves at home and now that we have a Parish Library have made it available to share with other parishioners. More modern books, equally readable and informative, were donated by Fr Victor, who keeps leaving stacks of books on the library desk, just as I have finished doing a pile of them! In fact, as I write this update a bag with 34 donations has just been left on the Library desk, to sort by subject, catalogue, label and shelf ready for use. It seems that a Librarian's work is never completed!

One last example from the top shelf is '*Living with Anxiety another Way*' a medical, psychological and spiritual approach (2008) by Dr Louis Masquin, a French Catholic neuropsychiatrist. With only 98 pages of print, it can be read in one sitting. What is appealing about the author's approach to the psychological problem of anxiety, is how his experience

as a Catholic practical psychiatrist shows conviction that the spiritual interpretation of anxiety has to be fused with the medical and psychological aspect if there is to be an effective cure to anxiety. As fear or anxiety is something we all experience at times of our life, the basic argument throughout the work is that those who do not have a personal daily encounter with God look elsewhere for the cure for their anxiety and often fear that their anxiety exceeds their human capacity to deal with it. The author believes that the physical, psychological and spiritual are all integral parts of each human being's identity and that it is detrimental to leave out any one aspect when dealing with anxiety. A patient must open his or her heart to Christ to live with and conquer anxiety and fear. It is a book in which clarity and conviction shines through every page and once you start reading it you cannot put it down.

It is a pleasure to see how the Library has grown and keeps growing. It would be even more enjoyable to see more parishioners using this asset. I recommend that if you haven't visited the Library, do pay a visit. There are books to suit all tastes! Maybe you may also want to volunteer to open the Library after the Mass you attend. There is a rota in some Masses where 3 or 4 attend, so you may only need to open once a month for a few minutes. However, there is no one to open on Saturday, and only me on Sunday (which means that if I need to attend another Mass, the Library cannot open on Sunday). So please do volunteer to give others the opportunity to avail themselves of these wonderful books.

And do keep donating books that you have read.

They are most welcome to be shared by other parishioners, and we will find a place for them, even though in my introduction I mention that the shelves are reaching saturation point. One method of making room for more books, as any experienced librarian would tell, is that the more parishioners borrow the more room they create for books, because a well used library can have up to half its stock out on loan. One last note: I had already returned Vera Brittain's book to the shelf labelled 'Top Shelf', and forgot to note down its shelfmark or book number (and forgot for the other reviewed books). I promise that in future I will include the book number after every Library book reviewed so that parishioners will be able to find any reviewed book without having to browse or consult the catalogue. For example: Shirley Williams biography can be found at 18.96 on the Top Shelf. Happy reading!

**Norbert Bonnici, Librarian**