

Eritrean Catholic Gheez-Rite Chaplaincy (ECGRC)

at St. Aidan of Lindisfarne RC Church
85 Old Oak Common Lane
London
W3 7DD

ECGRC-London Annual Retreat (Subae) 2011:

Fr. Ephrem Andom

31 Oct 2011

I just want to thank the wonderful Lord Whom we all worship and adore for the wonderful time we had had in London the last four days. It was just unBELIEVABLE to experience the power of the presence of the Holy Family amongst us from the very first song we sang on Thursday evening. We began with the new song "*Iyesus Mariam Yoseph*" (Jesus Mary Joseph) that evening and I just knew we were there for incredible spiritual surprises from the Good Lord. The atmosphere changed so dramatically, no one would doubt that the wonderful Family of Nazareth (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) were interceding for us and with us.



Day 1

According to plan, Thursday was dedicated to **St. Joseph**, the father of Jesus and the chaste spouse of Mary. **Fr. Ghebreyesus Ghebrezghi** from Leeds was the keynote speaker that night after I gave the introductory talk. **Fr. Ghebreyesus's** talk was so powerful and instructive that we got a better understanding of the greatness of St. Joseph. As that night was dedicated to St. Joseph, it was natural to pray for all fathers and husbands and those who plan to get married, which for me was the highest point of that evening. With the procession of those fathers carrying the picture of the Holy Family, our chaplaincy declared that the year 2012 is to be dedicated to the Holy Family. The atmosphere of prayer and praise was so electrifying we did not realize how we came to the final closing moments of the evening.

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Day 2

Friday was dedicated to **Mary Mother of Jesus and chaste spouse of St. Joseph**. That evening's keynote speaker was **Fr. Kidane Lebasi**, the founding and former chaplain of our chaplaincy.



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He spoke on the topic of "Mary Mother of Jesus". His talk was so deep and challenging to the people of our time who seem to forget the good family traditions and customs that shaped our identity as Christians and Eritreans. Women to be real women of God need to look to Mary how to live a holy life with their husbands and children. As on Thursday evening for men, prayers were offered for women. As Friday was dedicated to mothers, wives, engaged women and those who plan to get married through the intercession of Mary Mother of God, each woman received a personal prayer and a blessing from Fr. Ghebreyesus and myself when they were prayed over with the imposition of hands.



Day 3

Saturday was entirely a different day as the morning was dedicated for **Jesus the Infant** and the afternoon was dedicated for **Jesus the Youth**. The morning session was led mainly in English for our children.



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Fr. Perry from North London was a guest speaker to our children which he did brilliantly. Sara our catechist for children prepared them so beautifully (both spiritually and externally) they were so focused and very interested in everything that was taking place.



They also received a communal prayer from me and the whole congregation. It was so nice to see them singing and getting involved actively in the dialogue about their Faith. Followed the children program, we had a quick break for a lunch and refreshment.



Saturday afternoon saw some new surprises as one of our guest speakers for this year's Subae was a young layman from Leeds, **Meron Ghebremeskel**, who delivered a challenging message of the Gospel to his peers. *"We are purchased by the precious blood of Jesus and we belong to Him alone; so we have to live for His glory,"* he challenged the youth.

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His powerful message was followed by a special prayer for the youth which was really done so deeply. The presence of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Family were felt so deeply during the prayer time for them.



The other surprise of the day was that the Mezemran group was given a new uniform from a young couple who was blessed with a child through the intercession of Mary Mother of Jesus after a long and painful waiting and praying for a child. As a thanksgiving token, the couple decided to offer the youth group with a new uniform. As our youth had

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themselves prepared a special T-Shirts for the occasion, this was a very welcome surprise.



Day 4

Sunday was a very short day as we had to conclude our annual retreat earlier than usual just to take part at the Annual Diocesan International Mass with our Archbishop at the Cathedral. Unfortunately the two events fell on the same Sunday this year; so we had to conclude at 4pm when we felt that we were just beginning. What we had gathered during the previous days was knit together by Holy Mass both at St. Aidan's, East Acton and at the Cathedral.



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Many people were telling me that the whole thing was so short. I also felt the same but that is how one feels when they enjoy some thing. I hope other Eritrean Communities would declare a Holy Year of grace (or Jubilee) in 2012 so that they may have the chance to consecrate family life to God through the patronage of the Holy Family. **May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph bless us all!**

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Ephrem Andom



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For highlight of the Annual Retreat (Subae), please go to:

<http://www.catholicgheez.org> or

<http://www.facebook.com/catholicgheez.london> or

<http://picasaweb.google.com/catholicgheez>

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