

In This Issue >>>

Welcome
News & Events
Quiz
Notices
Key Dates



"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him" Jeremiah 17:7



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome
From
The Revd. Fr. Stephen Sharkey CF
Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (Army)



Welcome to Issue 42 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As the joy of Christmas still echoes in our hearts, we step gently into a new year filled with promise. The light of Christ, born among us, continues to guide our days, inviting us to carry hope forward, to trust in God's faithfulness, and to begin this year renewed in faith, love, and service.

We wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful 2026.

Beginning the New Year in Prayer and Hope



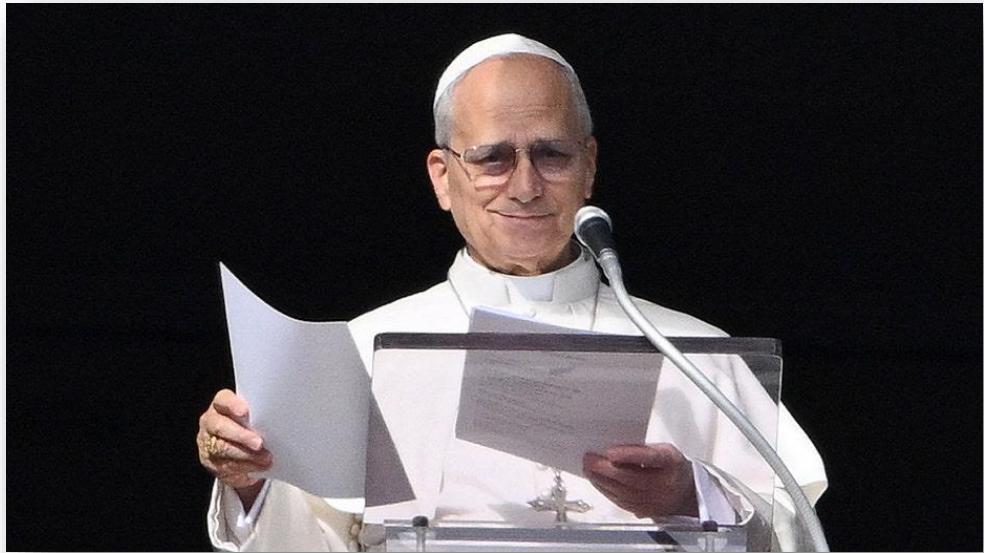
As the light of Christmas continues to glow and we step into a new year filled with hope, prayer offers us a steady anchor for both body and mind. In the quiet moments we take to pray, we find more than spiritual comfort, we encounter a practice that can calm the heart, ease inner burdens, and renew our strength. Especially at this turning point of the year, prayer invites us to carry the peace of Christ forward, nurturing psychological resilience and physical well-being while opening us to trust, healing, and hope for what lies ahead.

Prayer touches the human person in deeply holistic ways, shaping not only our spiritual lives but also our physical and psychological well-being. In moments of prayer, the body is invited into rest, breathing slows, tension eases, and the nervous system finds calm. This stillness can reduce stress and fatigue, allowing the body to recover and regain balance in a world that often feels rushed and demanding.

Psychologically, prayer creates space for reflection, meaning, and hope. It helps quiet anxious thoughts, strengthens emotional resilience, and offers comfort during times of uncertainty or loss. By placing worries into God's care, prayer can ease feelings of isolation and foster a sense of trust, gratitude, and inner peace. Over time, this regular turning toward prayer can shape how a person responds to challenges, encouraging patience, clarity, and a deeper awareness of God's presence in everyday life.

As we move forward from Christmas into the new year, prayer becomes a steady companion, grounding us in hope, renewing our strength, and gently transforming both mind and body through its quiet but powerful grace.

May we be encouraged to make prayer a daily habit in the year ahead, whether in moments of quiet gratitude, honest struggle, or simple presence before God. In doing so, we open ourselves to healing, balance, and hope, allowing prayer to shape us into more grounded, peaceful, and compassionate people.



Pope Leo: Start today to build a year of peace

By Kielce Gussie

At his first Angelus greeting of 2026, Pope Leo urges everyone to "build a year of peace, by disarming our hearts and refraining from every form of violence."

Greeting around 40,000 people gathered in Saint Peter's Square on the first day of 2026, Pope Leo XIV extended his heartfelt wishes for peace and every good to them. He also shared his best wishes to the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella.

In his words following the recitation of the Angelus prayer, the Pope pointed out that for the last 58 years—at the wish of Pope Saint Paul VI in 1968—January 1st has been celebrated as the World Day of Peace. In his own message for that day, Pope Leo recalled the greeting "the Lord suggested" to him after being elected to the papacy: "Peace be with you all!" This peace, he continued, "is unarmed and disarming, which comes from God, a gift of his unconditional love, and is entrusted to our responsibility."

With this responsibility, the Holy Father challenged everyone, with Christ's grace, to start today to "build a year of peace, disarming our hearts and refraining from all violence."

He acknowledged that many people and organizations around the world already dedicate themselves to ending violence and have created countless initiatives for building peace. Specifically, the Pope highlighted a national march which took place on the evening of 31 December in Catania, Italy, as well as a march to be held by members of the Community of Sant'Egidio. Finally, he took a moment to greet students and teachers from Richland, New Jersey, in the United States.

Recalling the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo closed his Angelus greetings with the Saint's blessing taken from Sacred Scripture: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." The Pope added his own wishes that Mary, the Mother of God "guide us on our journey in the new year."

The Angelus Prayer

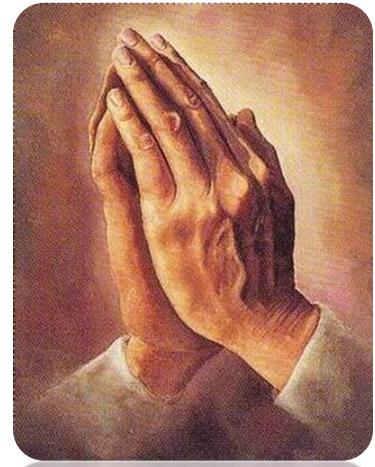
The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary, etc...
Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it done unto me according to Your Word.
Hail Mary, etc...

And the Word was made Flesh.
And dwelt among us.
Hail Mary, etc...

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:
Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord,
Your Grace into our hearts;
that as we have known the incarnation of Christ,
Your Son by the message of an angel,
so by His Passion and Cross
we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection.
Through the same Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.



Former Bishop of the Forces & Bishop of Arundel & Brighton is appointed Archbishop of Westminster



On 19th December 2025, his Holiness Pope Leo XIV appointed the Right Reverend Richard Moth as Archbishop of Westminster.

Ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Southwark on 3 July 1982, Archbishop-elect Moth has served as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton since 2015. Prior to that, he was the Catholic Bishop of the Forces from 2009 to 2015.

Archbishop-elect Moth will become the 12th Archbishop of Westminster, succeeding Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who has served in the role since 2009. Cardinal Nichols will now become Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Westminster until Archbishop-elect Moth is Installed at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 14 February 2026.

On hearing of his appointment, Archbishop-elect Moth said:

"I am moved greatly by the trust that Pope Leo has placed in me, in appointing me to the Diocese of Westminster. As I prepare to move to the Diocese, I am so grateful for the support being given to me by Cardinal Vincent Nichols at this time. He has given dedicated service to the Diocese and will be missed greatly.

"Serving the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton has given me the wonderful opportunity of sharing the Church's mission with lay faithful and clergy, and I give thanks for the many blessings of these last ten years.

"My first task will be to get to know the priests and people of Westminster and I look forward, now, to serving them. With them and building on the firm foundations that have been laid by so many down

the years, I look forward to continuing the great adventure that is the life of the Church and witness to the Gospel."

Cardinal Vincent Nichols said:

"I am delighted at this news. Archbishop-elect Richard will bring to our Diocese many gifts and considerable episcopal experience from his years of ministry in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and before that as Bishop of the Forces. I look forward very much to his Installation as our new Archbishop on Saturday, 14 February 2026. It is, of course, St Valentine's Day, as well as the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, co-Patrons of Europe.

"I remember being present in Westminster Cathedral on 29 September 2009 for the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Richard as Bishop of the Forces. So today I can say: 'Welcome back, dear Bishop Richard. You are most welcome indeed.'"



May we wish Bishop Richard many congratulations and blessings and keep him in our prayers as he prepares for his new ministry.

Exercise Suman Warrior 2025



by Fr. David Burke CF - Chaplain to 1st Battalion Irish Guards

At this time of writing, I have been the chaplain for the 1st Battalion Irish Guards for the past three months, half of which I have been 'out the door' on exercise. Join the army - see the world. Join 'the micks' - go to the furthest parts of the World.

At the beginning of November, I accompanied the Irish Guards as they participated on Ex Suman Warrior 25, which this year was in New Zealand.

Suman Warrior is a five yearly land-based command post exercise (CPX) conducted by the five member nations: **Singapore, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand**. This year, the exercise was generously hosted by the New Zealand Defence Force at Linton Military Camp, near Palmerston North.



The Five battle groups, representing each of the partners, devised their own tactical response to a conflict scenario drawn up by the team at the New Zealand Army's 1st (New Zealand) Brigade and the Army Training Group's Mission Command Training Centre. The exercise not only gave an opportunity to test tactical skills in a high-intensity environment but supported some incredibly talented military minds from ally and partner nations to plan and execute military operations together, strengthening collective tactical planning and shared expertise.

To quote Colonel van Welie, of New Zealand Army's 1st Brigade: "It's vitally important to train alongside our allies and some of our closest partners in the Indo-Pacific and it's a real honour to host this exercise at Linton. Exercises like these, which fundamentally revolve around building strong partnerships and working together to protect our region, also encourage exchanged learnings and tactical knowledge which can only enhance our operational interoperability in the future."



It wasn't all war-gaming during the exercise, though. We also participated in the hotly contested International Sports competition. I'm pleased to say that the Irish Guards secured a first place against strong competition from the other forces. The events included volleyball and tug of war with the 1st Battalion Irish Guards demonstrating exceptional teamwork and determination, but I'm certain having their chaplain participating in the 'tug of war' team, got them over the Line. ☺

Talking of chaplains, the chaplains of Linton Camp warmly welcomed their overseas colleague to New Zealand. As well as their welcome, it was good to share with them different experiences of working in military chaplaincy. NB: Their coffee is also very good.





I was honoured to be asked to lead the Armistice Day Service at Linton where we remembered those from home and in New Zealand who have given their lives in places of war and conflict. We will remember them.

We left Ex Suman Warrior for the long journey home but armed with great memories made, new experiences gained and great hospitality enjoyed, as well as the making of some new friends. Thank you to the New Zealand Defence force for such a great and unforgettable welcome and experience.



Ministry in Motion

Fr. Volodymyr Sampara who is currently deployed in Estonia sent in some photographs from Christmas Eve Mass in their chapel on the 24th December. There were around 120 soldiers together with the Commanding Officer and a few French representatives. There was some beautifully performed hymn singing by the Fijians as well as carols that were sung together. Holy Mass was celebrated on the 26th December in the city of Tartu with the Estonian & Ukrainian Catholic community and Christmas carols were sung by youth of the parish.





Army Chaplaincy Quiz

1. Who is the current Bishop of the Forces and what diocese did he come from?
2. Who is the current Chaplain General and what is his denomination?
3. What Services come under military chaplaincy in the UK?
4. What are chaplains not allowed to do and where is this stated?
5. When was The Royal Army Chaplains Department (RAChD) formed?
6. What are the 5 major world faith groups represented within military chaplaincy and approximately how many denominations?
7. What does the abbreviation 'KHC' stand for?
8. How many regular serving Roman Catholic Chaplains are there in the Army and how many Roman Catholic Reservist Chaplains?
9. Who was the first Chaplain General?
10. Who was the first clergyman to be awarded the Victoria Cross and in what year?
11. What is the name of the most recent Army Chaplain to lose his life in service?
12. What year saw the appointment of a Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain within Army Chaplaincy?
13. What year was the first Roman Catholic Army Chaplain appointed as Deputy Chaplain General?
14. Who is the current Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain?

Vocations

Ready to Serve?

If you believe God may be calling you to this extraordinary form of ministry, we encourage you to contact the Vocations Director for the Bishopric for a conversation. Explore the possibility of serving both the Church and our armed forces with faith, courage, and compassion.

Vocations Director:

Fr Kevin Dow CF

email: Kevin.Dow101@mod.gov.uk

For further information on chaplaincy in the different services please see:

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/roles/chaplain

www.jobs.army.mod.uk/roles/royal-army-chaplains-department/chaplain/

www.recruitment.raf.mod.uk/roles/roles-finder/chaplaincy/chaplain

The Bishopric of the Forces exists to provide for the spiritual, sacramental and pastoral well-being of Catholic servicemen and women, and their families, within the British Armed Forces. Unlike any other diocese, the Bishopric of the Forces has no geographical boundaries but encompasses anywhere in the world that United Kingdom military personnel are serving or deployed.

ANSWERING THE CALL:
BECOME A CATHOLIC MILITARY CHAPLAIN



*Roman Catholic
Bishopric
Of The Forces*



O Lord Jesus Christ, instil in the hearts of priests the desire to dedicate their lives to you as chaplains to our Armed Services. Give them wisdom and strength, to hear your call. Give courage and compassion to those who serve you as Forces Chaplains. May their hearts be filled with zeal and love of you so that your name may be better known and loved, for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

What is Spiritual Direction?



Are you facing a challenge or a big decision?

Are you feeling stuck or not sure what to do next?

Spiritual direction can help you during these times.

Spiritual direction is a special time where you can talk to someone about your thoughts, feelings, and faith. It's a bit like having a guide who helps you listen to God and notice how God is working in your life.

The aim is to have a closer relationship with God through prayer and how we live each day.

The person you talk to is called a *spiritual director*.

They won't tell you what to do, but they will help you find your way, understand your faith better, and grow in your friendship with God.

You can talk about anything, things that make you happy or sad, things that confuse you, or big questions about life and faith.

Everything you say is private and safe.



Please contact Karen - ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com for more details if this is something you would like to explore.



Chrism Mass

Wednesday 18th March 2026 at 1200 hrs

The annual Mass of Chrism will be celebrated by Bishop Paul at the military Cathedral of St Michael and St George, Queen's Avenue, Aldershot GU11 2BY at 1200 hrs on Wednesday 18 March 2026.

At the Mass the Bishop will consecrate the holy oils used for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Anointing of the Sick throughout the Bishopric for the coming year.

The Mass is also an occasion for the gathered military chaplains to renew their priestly vows. All are very welcome to attend.

For further information, or to express your interest in attending, please contact: diane.restall654@mod.gov.uk

66th International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2026



The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 21st May 2026, returning Monday 25th May 2026.

Serving personnel may obtain details from their Military Chaplain or from the Pilgrimage Organiser:
Father Nick Gosnell, Cathedral of St. Michael and St. George, Queens Avenue, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2BY. Tel: 01252 315042

The Travel agents are Tangney Tours, Pilgrim House, Station Road, Borough Green, Kent TN15 8AF.
Tel: 01732 886666

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

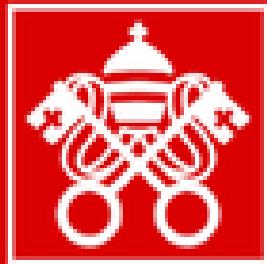


Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary?

A one-day retreat centered on the theme of Spiritual Resilience will be held for Armed Forces personnel and MOD Civil Servants seeking a moment of reflection, renewal and reconnection. On 23rd June at St Michael & St George, Aldershot and on 25th June at St Joan of Arc Church, Catterick Garrison. These retreats offer a valuable opportunity to pause from the demands of service life and explore the deeper dimensions of personal strength through guided prayer, quiet contemplation and group discussion. Rooted in the Christian tradition yet open to all levels of faith and belief, the day will focus on nurturing the spiritual pillar of the force resilience tetrad, alongside physical, psychological and social wellbeing.

Participants will be invited to consider how spiritual resilience can support them in times of challenge, uncertainty and transition. Through a blend of reflective exercises, scriptural insights and shared experiences, the retreat aims to foster inner peace, moral clarity and a renewed sense of purpose. Whether you are new to the idea of retreat or returning for a fresh encounter, this day promises a safe and welcoming space to deepen your faith journey and strengthen your spiritual core.

For further information please contact: armyrcpaa21@gmail.com



VATICAN NEWS

Vatican News is the portal for Vatican information where you can find the latest news on Pope Leo, the Holy See, the Church in the world, and international news.

Please follow the link to access the site: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en.html>



Online with Saints App



Online with Saints offers a virtual encounter with 100+ saints from all around the world. Women and Men, carpenters and scholars, mothers and popes, princes and paupers: their inspiring life stories are linked to real life modern questions. Be sure to check the social media profiles of the saints in the app.

Anyone can become a saint. Each saint is different, with their own unique personality and destiny. Each of them found their vocation in a different way - demonstrating that God has a special plan and vocation for each individual.

Download the FREE online with saints app on either [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

Discover much more information about the saints:

- Social media profiles of the saints.
- Animated videos about their lives.
- Information on their history.
- Pray with the saints and find patron saints.

Access videos

Turn on the subtitles in YouTube

- Via the app: scan a saint in the book.
- Via the app: click on a saint's profile, play the video.
- Via the website onlinewithsaints.com
- Via the YouTube channel of *Online with Saints*

Catholic Military App is Live!



The [Apostolat Militaire International](#) and [Tweeting with GOD](#) have launched the FREE Catholic Military Connect App. See the launch video [here!](#) It's designed explicitly for military Catholics.

- ❖ It offers:
- ❖ Strong Catholic prayers, all downloaded so they can be accessed easily whilst on ship/ops/ex etc.
- ❖ Answers to 200+ questions about faith and the military.
- ❖ Prayers specifically for the military.
- ❖ Testimonies from serving Catholics.
- ❖ Inspiring military Saints and quotes.
- ❖ Guidance for preparing for Mass and Confession.
- ❖ Spiritual first aid.
- ❖ Contact details for the Military Chaplain and Association of whichever country the user is in.
- ❖ The facility to upload spiritual reading.

The CMC app is currently available in both the [Google Play](#) and [App stores](#), for smartphones and tablets, in 8 languages (English, Italian, French, Spanish, Croatian, German, Portuguese and Dutch). This is an excellent resource for your spiritual armoury.



The Holy See endorses CMC App

The Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Parolin, sent a message for the launch of the CMC App to the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. In his words: "I believe that the app will be immensely helpful to all military personnel, and in a particular way to young men and women who, in this important sector of civil service, seek to grow in personal friendship with Jesus Christ." See the video.



Key Dates in Jan & Feb

Baptism of the Lord (Feast) – *12th January*

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – *19th January*

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – *26th January*

St. Thomas of Aquinas,
Priest & Dr of the Church – *28th January*

Presentation of the Lord
(Feast) – *2nd February*

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time – *9th February*

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time – *16th February*

The Chair of St. Peter, Apostle
(Feast) – *22nd February*

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time – *23rd February*

Information.....

*If you wish to know more about Roman Catholic matters within the Army Faith Community, please contact: **Mrs Karen Horn MBE** Pastoral Assistant (PA) to PRCC(A) at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com*