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"God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy" Pope Francis



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

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



Welcome to Issue 43 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As we enter the Holy season of Lent, we are invited, wherever we serve, to pause, reflect, and return our hearts to the Lord. For those in uniform and their families, Lent offers a steady anchor amid the demands of military life: a call to prayer, sacrifice, and renewal that strengthens both faith and mission. May these forty days deepen our trust in God, sharpen our commitment to serve with integrity and compassion, and remind us that even in sacrifice, hope rises with Christ.

The Complete Guide to the Catholic Season of Lent Lent 2026



The weather begins to change, calendars continue to turn, Christmas and New Year's celebrations drift further into the rearview mirror. All are signs that Lent is drawing near. Lent is one of the five seasons of the Catholic liturgical calendar, along with Advent, Christmas, Easter, and Ordinary Time. It precedes Easter and is a solemn period centred on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. While Lent is often associated with the Catholic faith, many Christians, including Protestant and Orthodox, observe it.

There is no better time to reconnect with or deepen one's faith than Lent. During this time, we can draw closer to God as we prepare for the joyous celebration of Christ's resurrection at Easter. Lent can be an incredibly rewarding time for our faith lives.

Season Of Lent

Like Advent, where we prepare for Jesus's birth at Christmas, Lent is also a liturgical season of preparation, as we get ready for Easter the Church's greatest celebration. And just like our weather seasons have unique characteristics, so too do seasons within the Church. In contrast to Advent and Easter, Lent is more solemn. The sacrament of reconciliation where we ask God for forgiveness becomes more popular. It's a time when Christians and Catholics discover how to confess and the power of God's forgiveness.

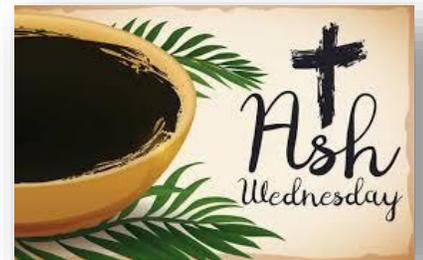




The Stations of the Cross, a tradition often taking place on Fridays during Lent, allow us to pray with of Jesus's final hours. Weddings and the big celebrations that accompany this wonderful sacrament are less common during this time.

More solemn songs replace celebratory hymns during Mass. Singing our most joyful hymns during Lent would be like throwing an outdoor pool party in the dead of winter: It just doesn't fit with the season. Lent is far too important of a season to skip over or treat like any other time of the year.

The first day of Lent is always Ash Wednesday, in which we use ashes on our forehead in the shape of a cross to remember our own mortality and begin our journey of penance. Ashes can be distributed during Mass or separately, in shorter services specifically designed for giving out ashes. This year, it all starts with Ash Wednesday on February 18, 2026. But the story of Lent begins in the Bible.



Lent: The Biblical Roots

Where does Lent come from? Lent draws its inspiration from the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. The Gospels tell us that after his baptism, Jesus fasted in the desert and then was tempted by the devil. He resisted these temptations and then went to Galilee to begin his public ministry.

"Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him and behold, angels came and ministered to him. Matthew 4: 8-11"



What to give up for Lent

As Ash Wednesday draws near, many Catholics often find themselves wondering what they ought to "give up" for Lent. Lenten sacrifices can be valuable if they help increase our reliance on Jesus and if the void we create by giving something up opens up space in our hearts for God to fill. As much as we consider something to abstain from during Lent, we ought to consider what we can commit to as well. What outside actions can we take to better ignite the flame of our faith within us?

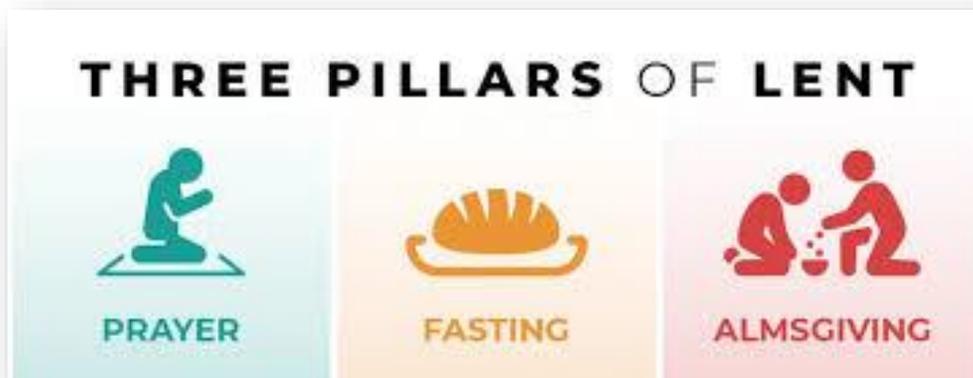


Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving: The Three Pillars

Three key pillars characterise the Lenten season: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (charity). It has been said that "we seek the Lord in prayer by reading Sacred Scripture; we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting." While most Catholics are familiar with "no meat on Fridays" during Lent, fasting and abstinence are important components throughout Lent. This may look like giving up things like gossip, your favourite coffee order, or forgoing music in the car and replacing it with prayer.

Almsgiving reminds us of Jesus's call to serve and connects us in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need.

And lastly: prayer. Prayer invites us to slow down, listen more deeply, and open our hearts to God's grace.



Lent: Liturgical Changes

Purple (or violet) is the colour of the Lenten season, and this is reflected in the vestments (chasuble) that a priest wears for most of Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday.

The "Gloria in Excelsis," normally sung in a celebratory manner, is omitted, as is the "Alleluia" normally sung before the Gospel. "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of Endless Glory" often serves as the replacement.

These are subtle reminders to us that we are in the desert with Jesus, inviting God to work in us during this time of sacrifice.



Preparing for Holy Week and Easter



Lent includes Palm Sunday, which presents its own unique liturgy, featuring a procession of the congregation into the church along with, of course, the distribution of palms. It is during this service that the entire Passion story is read aloud as we begin Holy Week.

Lent technically ends on Holy Thursday as we celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper, remembering Jesus's final meal with his disciples in which he institutes the Eucharist. Following this Mass, the altar and worship space are stripped bare, and the Blessed Sacrament is processed out from the altar to a chapel.



The next day is Good Friday, the only day of the year when Mass is not celebrated (though communion is distributed at some services). Holy Saturday, the day of waiting for the joy of the Resurrection, completes what is known as the Triduum: the three days leading up to Easter Sunday.

Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for Lent 2026, 13.02.2026

The following is the text of the Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for Lent 2026, on the theme: "*Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion*":

Message of the Holy Father

Listening and Fasting:

Lent as a Time of Conversion

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the centre of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry" (*Ex 3:7*). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen *as he does*. We must recognize that "the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church."^[1]

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we "hunger" for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our "appetites," keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbour.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: "In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This

reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.”^[2] Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.”^[3] As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.”^[4]

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbour. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one’s conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr

LEO PP. XIV

^[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 9.

^[2] Augustine *The Usefulness of Fasting*, 1, 1.

^[3] Benedict XVI, *Catechesis* (9 March 2011).

^[4] Paul VI, *Catechesis* (8 February 1978).

Ex Petrine Lancer

January 2026

By Fr. Kevin Dow, Chaplain, The Royal Lancers



Under the guidance of Fr. Kevin Dow CF, Regimental Chaplain, a contingent of officers along with the Regimental Sergeant Major of The Royal Lancers (Queen Elizabeths' Own) conducted an educational, ceremonial and professional visit to Rome and the Vatican, strengthening historic ties with allied institutions and reaffirming the regiment's enduring traditions.

Following in the footsteps of their antecedent regiment of the 12th Lancers, who were granted a Papal audience in 1794 with Pope Pius VI following on from their service given in defence of the Papal States against the invading French forces of Napoleon, a service recognised by the Pope, through the presentation of a gold papal medal each, and 3 melodies that were known thereafter as the Regimental Hymns.

The tradition of the Lancers and the Holy See continued with the Commanding Officer of the 12th Lancers being granted an audience with Pope Pius XII in the summer of 1945 during the height of the Italian campaign of the Second World War, when he was presented a set of rosary beads. In August 1982 officers from the 9th/12th were given an audience by Pope John Paul II and again the 9th/12th were received in audience by Pope Francis following on from his election to the Papacy. This recent visit to the Vatican was the first visit of the last remaining regiment of Lancers left in the British Army.





After travelling to Rome the day before, the visit commenced with a guided tour of the Swiss Guard Armoury within the walls of the Vatican City. Members of the regiment were afforded the opportunity to examine the Guard's historic arms, armour, and ceremonial equipment, which reflect centuries of continuous service to the Holy See. The exchange provided valuable insight into the evolution of ceremonial soldiery and the shared heritage of elite guard units in Europe.

The regiment was subsequently received by His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the Holy See at his residence. The Ambassador welcomed the delegation and highlighted the long-standing relationship between the United Kingdom and the Holy See, noting the importance of diplomacy and ceremonial engagement in fostering mutual understanding and respect between institutions on how the two governments can assist each other on a global scene especially in the areas surrounding human rights.



Continuing the programme, The Royal Lancers visited the regiment of the Italian Lancieri di Montebello. This engagement celebrated the shared cavalry heritage of both regiments. Discussions focused on regimental history, traditions, and the modern role of armoured cavalry within NATO and allied forces. The visit concluded with a formal exchange of regimental gifts, marking the strength of the bond between the two lancer regiments.

The visit reached its culmination on the second day, with an audience granted by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. With His Excellency, the Ambassador, The Royal Lancers were represented by their commanding officer, who conveyed the regiment's respect and appreciation for the audience and presented a few regimental mementos to mark the occasion.



The visit was conducted with the highest standards of professionalism and ceremonial bearing throughout. It served to honour the regiment's history, reinforce international friendships, and represent the British Army with distinction on the international stage.



Participants of Ex PETRINE LANCER on the steps of the Pontifical Irish College before transferring to the Vatican.

Several members of the regiment in St. Peter's Basilica following the Papal Audience.



Archbishop Richard Moth's Installation as the 12th Archbishop of Westminster 14th February 2026



On Saturday 14th February, many gathered at Westminster Cathedral for the installation of the new Archbishop of Westminster, a truly magnificent celebration attended by more than 2,000 people. The choir sang beautifully, the music was wholly uplifting, and the entire liturgy was marked by a deep sense of joy and thanksgiving. It was a fitting and prayerful beginning to this new chapter in the life of the diocese and beyond. We offer our heartfelt congratulations and assure the Archbishop of our prayers as he begins his ministry in this important role.



The Most Reverend Richard Moth was today installed as the Twelfth Archbishop of Westminster during a Mass of Installation at Westminster Cathedral at 12 noon on Saturday 14 February 2026.

The Mass of Installation followed a Service of Solemn Vespers held in the Cathedral on Friday evening, attended by clergy, religious, and representatives of schools, parishes and Catholic organisations from across the Diocese of Westminster.

To the sound of a fanfare specially composed by Simon Johnson, Master of Music, Archbishop Moth entered the Cathedral through the Great West Door and was greeted by the Provost, Canon Shaun Lennard.

The rite of reception draws on an ancient Pontifical used at Canterbury during the time of Archbishop Chichele (1414-1443). It has been customary in Westminster since the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850 and the appointment of Nicholas Wiseman as first Archbishop of Westminster.

The moment of Installation followed the public reading of Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Letter by Canon Jeremy Trood, Chancellor of the Diocese of Westminster. Canon Lennard then pronounced the formula of Installation:

By his authority I, Shaun Lennard,
being Provost of the Metropolitan Chapter of Westminster,
do install you, the Lord Richard,
Archbishop in this Church of Westminster,
in which may our Lord Jesus Christ
guard your going in from henceforth,
now and for evermore.

Following the Installation, the Archbishop-Emeritus, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, presented Archbishop Moth with the Westminster crozier, symbol of his office as bishop. The Provost and Canons of the Metropolitan Chapter then greeted the new Archbishop, followed by representatives of the diocesan clergy, ethnic chaplaincies, and pastoral and administrative bodies.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, then greeted Archbishop Moth on behalf of the co-presidents of Churches Together in England, offering a word of welcome:

'I stand here also as one who has recently been confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury and who awaits installation. In the months ahead, you and I will share a particular responsibility as Presidents of Churches Together in England, and I very much look forward to working with you to deepen our relationships and to strengthen our shared Christian witness.'

Following the conclusion of the installation rite, Archbishop Moth celebrated a Pontifical Mass. The prayers and readings were those of the Feast of Saints Cyril, Monk, and Methodius, Bishop. The Gospel was proclaimed by Deacon Paul Christian, Cathedral Chaplain and Family Link Worker for Caritas St Joseph's. The Mass Deacons were Deacon Adrian Cullen, Director of the Diaconate Programme for the Diocese of Westminster, and Deacon Jon Harman, Formation and Spirituality Adviser for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

In his homily, Archbishop Moth called on the Diocese to "fan into flame the gift of God," reflecting on Saint Paul's exhortation that "God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control."

He emphasised that the power given by the Holy Spirit is not one of domination, but of service, a self-giving love modelled on Christ. He emphasised that the Church's mission flows from prayer and the Eucharist, and that the gifts received in Baptism and Confirmation are to be lived out courageously in daily life.

He called on the Diocese to renew its commitment to evangelisation, ensuring that the light of the Gospel shines in parishes, schools, homes and workplaces, and in the public square. He encouraged engagement with the pressing issues of our time, including peace, human dignity, the right to life at every stage, the protection of the vulnerable, the plight of refugees and care for creation.

Acknowledging past failures, especially where the vulnerable have been harmed, the Archbishop reaffirmed his commitment to safeguarding, accountability and learning from those who have suffered.

Marking the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, he reminded the faithful that mission must be rooted in prayer, sustained by the Eucharist and marked by patience and perseverance. Concluding, he expressed hope that the Diocese of Westminster will continue to serve Christ and society by fanning into flame the gift of the Holy Spirit, nurtured through prayer.

The Bidding Prayers were read by representatives of diocesan services, including Caritas Westminster, the Education Service, Westminster Youth Ministry, the Safeguarding Service, the Agency for Evangelisation and the Communications Office.

The altar frontal and vestments worn by Archbishop Moth and the Deacons were made by Watts & Co in 2009 from specially woven gold fabric featuring Byzantine-inspired designs based on vestments in the Cathedral collection created in 1928 for Cardinal Bourne.

The principal chalice used by the Archbishop dates from 1529 and was crafted in silver-gilt during the reign of King Henry VIII, predating the Reformation. Donated to the Cathedral by Baron Antonio French and his sisters, it has traditionally been used on Maundy Thursday and in recent years at the Ordination of Priests.

The Archbishop's crozier and other liturgical vessels form part of a distinguished set of Italian silver-gilt ecclesiastical plate that once belonged to Cardinal Edward Henry Howard (1829-1892), former Cardinal Archpriest of St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

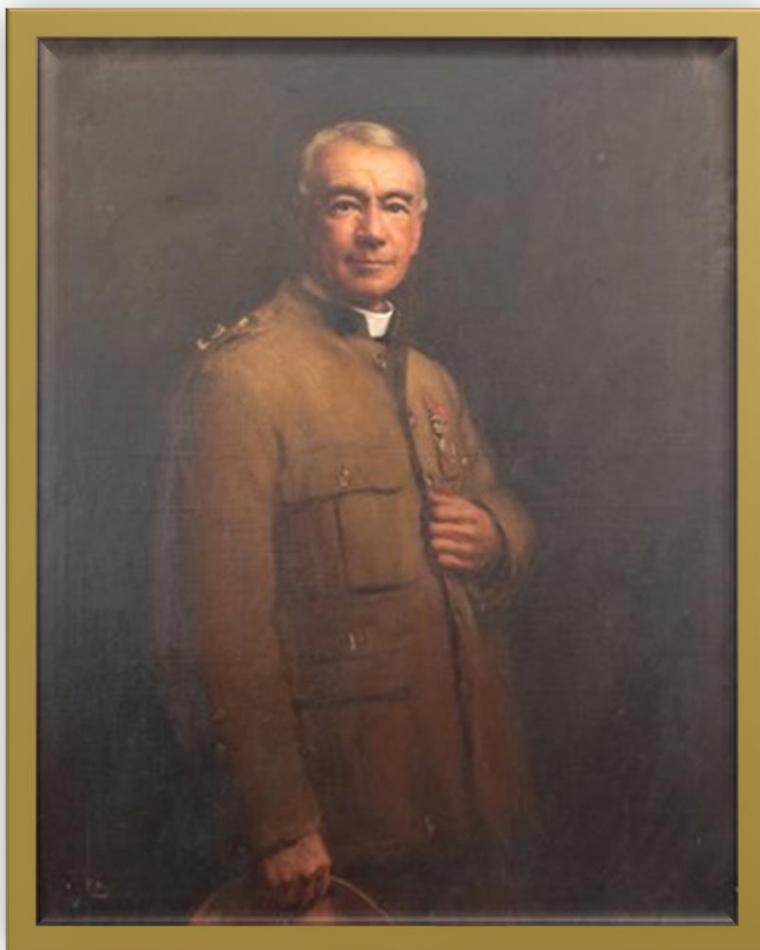
Towards the end of the Mass, during the singing of the Church's great hymn of thanksgiving, the Te Deum, Archbishop Moth was led around the Cathedral to bless the people, and in doing so, paused briefly for prayer at the tomb of one of his predecessors, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the 10th Archbishop of Westminster (2000-2009), and 3rd Bishop of Arundel and Brighton (1977-2000).

The Diocese of Westminster serves the London boroughs north of the River Thames, stretching from the River Lea in the east to Hillingdon in the west, and including Hertfordshire to the north and the Borough of Spelthorne to the south.

Established by Blessed Pius IX on 29 September 1850, the diocese celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2025. Today, the diocese's parishes and schools reflect a rich diversity of cultures and traditions. A key part of its mission is expressed through agencies such as Caritas Westminster who support those most at risk of exclusion due to poverty, disability, isolation, and exploitation.



Newly Revealed: A Rare Portrait That Brings Army Chaplain History to Light



Fr. Edmund Joseph Von Würzburg
27 Dec 1840 – 11 Oct 1906 (aged 65)

"I recently travelled to Leyburn in North Yorkshire to attend an antique auction after the Army Roman Catholic trust received word that a rare and historically significant portrait was due to go under the hammer: a Roman Catholic Army Chaplain from the Boer War. With strong interest in the room and bidding quickly intensifying, the auction proved fiercely competitive. After a tense exchange, I was ultimately successful in securing the portrait on behalf of the trust. The painting will now undergo specialist restoration before taking its place in its final and permanent home."

Karen Horn MBE, Pastoral Assistant Army RC Trust & Army RC Newsletter Editor

From German Scholar to Battlefield Chaplain

Born in Bavaria, Germany on 27th December 1840, this remarkable Jesuit priest lived a life shaped by study, service, and quiet courage. His journey began in Germany at the University of Bonn, before he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in 1866 at Gorheim, Sigmaringen. Not long after, his path led him across borders and cultures when he transferred to the English Province of the Jesuits, completing his formation at St Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst.

Stonyhurst would become a formative home. For six years he served the community as Assistant Prefect of Philosophers and Guest Master; roles that placed him at the heart of Jesuit intellectual life and hospitality. In 1877, he was ordained a priest at St Beuno's College in North Wales, marking the beginning of a ministry that would take him far beyond the classroom.

After a year as Minister at the Jesuit novitiate in Roehampton, he was sent north to the Yorkshire mission, serving for a time in Pontefract before moving to St Mary's, Chesterfield, as assistant priest in 1879.

His vocation would eventually take him even farther afield. Between 1901 and 1903, he served as a military chaplain during the Boer War in South Africa, bringing spiritual support to soldiers in the midst of conflict. For this service, he was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal. When the war ended, he returned once more to Chesterfield, continuing his ministry among the people he served so faithfully at the Catholic Church of Annunciation.

Fr. Edmund died in Sheffield on 11 October 1906, aged 65, and he is buried in the churchyard of the Immaculate Conception, Spinkhill, Northeast Derbyshire. A place still connected to his life and legacy. A life spanning universities, missions, and war zones, his story is a powerful reminder of the global reach and enduring commitment of the Jesuit calling.

RARE PORTRAIT OF BOER WAR ROMAN CATHOLIC ARMY CHAPLAIN BOUGHT BY The Army Roman Catholic Trust

An article by Dr. James Hagerty

In a recent article in the *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Dr James Hagerty recounted the ministry of Catholic army chaplains to British troops engaged in the Second Boer War (1899-1902). Fr. Edmund von Wurtzburg of the Society of Jesus was one of twenty-two commissioned and temporary Catholic chaplains.¹ In January 2026 a portrait of Fr. von Wurtzburg in army uniform, was bought by The Army Roman Catholic Trust and is about to undergo necessary restoration.

Edmund von Wurtzburg was born into an aristocratic family in Bavaria in December 1840. He received his early education in Germany and England and after studies at the University of Bonn entered the novitiate of the German Province of the Society of Jesus in March 1866. He later transferred to the English Province and completed his novitiate at St. Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst. He was ordained priest at St. Beuno's College on September 23, 1877.

After ministering at the Jesuit Novitiate at Roehampton, he was sent on the Yorkshire mission and served at Pontefract. In 1879 he was appointed curate at the Church of the Annunciation, Spencer Street, Chesterfield, and from there he ministered among the town's labouring poor.

From 1901 to 1903, Fr. von Wurtzburg served as army chaplain in the war against the Boers in South Africa and was awarded a campaign medal with clasps. Proud of his military experience, he kept his field kit ready cherishing a soldier's hope of someday ranging the veldt again.

On his return from the war, he met with an enthusiastic welcome at Chesterfield railway station and a full-length portrait of him in his khaki uniform was commissioned by leading citizens. On 22 June 1904 the portrait was presented to the former chaplain "from the whole of Chesterfield."

Fr. von Wurtzburg returned to his priestly life in Chesterfield and supported many charitable causes. He died on 11 October 1906 and his Requiem Mass at the Jesuit church in Chesterfield was sung by Bishop Robert Brindle of Nottingham, himself a highly decorated Catholic army chaplain. The mourners included Baron Edmund von Wurtzburg, nephew of Fr. von Wurtzburg, and a representative of the Duke of Norfolk who was a cousin of the former chaplain.²

The portrait of Fr. von Wurtzburg was hung at Mount St. Mary's College until the college closed in 2025. In January 2026 it was purchased by The Army Roman Catholic Trust. There are plenty of photographs of Catholic military chaplains but few (if any?) portraits and this is what makes Fr. Wurtzburg's so rare.

¹ James Hagerty, "The soldier...needs a soldier-priest, especially in a country like this..." Catholic Army Chaplains in the Boer War 1899-1902' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, vol. 102, no. 411, 2024, pp. 331-353.

² Sandra Struggles, 'Father Edmund von Wurtzburg SJ' in *History Paper No. 28*, Chesterfield and District Local History, March 2004.



Rev. Fr. Edmund von Wurtzburg SJ

British School (Early 20th Century)

Portrait of a Colonial Army Chaplain, three-quarter length, wearing a khaki uniform and holding a slouch hat.

Oil on canvas, with fragments of an indistinct original inscribed label verso, 125.5cm by 100cm.

Artist

J. H. Bentley, Sheffield

Provenance: Early Provenance unknown.

The property of Mount St Mary's College and Barlborough Hall School, Derbyshire until 2026.

This work was sold in January 2026 on behalf of the Joint Administrators of Mount St Mary's College and Barlborough Hall School, Derbyshire.



SAVE A STORY OF FAITH & SERVICE

Help Restore a Rare Boer War Portrait

At the heart of this painting is a Roman Catholic Army chaplain who served with distinction during the Boer War, a quiet but powerful witness to faith, duty, and compassion amid conflict. Decorated for his service, he represents the often-unseen spiritual courage that sustained soldiers on the battlefield.

Time, however, has taken its toll.

Cracking across the surface, dulled pigments, and a weakening canvas now threaten to erase irreplaceable details; not only of the sitter's likeness, but of the story he carries. Without professional conservation, this extraordinary work risks being lost forever.

Why Restoration Matters

Your support will allow specialist conservators to:

- Stabilise the fragile canvas
 - Repair surface cracking
- Revive the original depth, colour, and presence
- Preserve this historic tribute for future generations

This is more than a painting. It is a testament to service, sacrifice, and moral courage in wartime.

How You Can Help

Every contribution, large or small, brings this portrait closer to renewal.
Donate today and be part of preserving history.

👉 **Donate via PayPal:**

https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=22APJZDMN38PU

📱 *Or scan the QR code to contribute instantly*



Reviving a Sacred Tradition: 'The First Icon of Our Lady of Victories Commissioned for the Modern Soldier'



Michele McAloon - Features 17th January 2026

A Marian icon smuggled out of Ukraine for transit to London comes under fire.

It sounds like the plot of a spy movie. But it isn't, through prayer and international efforts by a host of Catholics, this very real icon now offers inspiration to military personnel and their families. The story goes further back than present day, all the way back to the 16th century.

Our Lady of Victory has a long and storied history in the Catholic Church. In 1571, Pope St. Pius V, the same pontiff who oversaw the historic Council of Trent (1545-1563), knew Christian forces battling against the Ottoman Empire needed help. Praying the Rosary, he entrusted the protection of the Christian naval fleet to the Virgin Mary.

Allegedly, the moment Christian forces declared victory on the sea, Pope Pius stood in his papal office in St. Peter's, looked to the sky and said, "Give thanks to God because our fleet has won a victory." When first written reports confirmed the triumph at the Battle of Lepanto, Pope Pius established a universal feast day for Our Lady of Victory, also known as Our Lady of the Rosary.

As Our Lady is victorious over both spiritual and temporal battles, she is also referred to as Our Lady of Victories. She is spiritual patroness for Britain's Catholic Military Association of Our Lady of Victories (CMA-UK), formally erected as a lay association of the faithful. The association's mission is to "continually cultivate a sincere and deep Catholic practice across the armed forces." There are now sister organizations in the United States and Canada. Talks are beginning to establish a presence in Ukraine, where many Eastern Catholic soldiers are fighting.

As early as the 18th century, Catholics have been disproportionately represented among those serving in the British armed forces. In the early 2000s, the British Ministry of Defence, as part of a series of ecumenical reforms, decided to discontinue the recognition of denomination-specific chaplains. As a result, many Catholic service members are often deprived of access to the sacraments since their assigned chaplain may be Anglican or of other Protestant denomination, or even humanist. CMA-UK seeks to ensure that all military personnel receive the spiritual and sacramental support they need.

Since the CMA's inception, the group has been looking for a painting or suitable representation of Our Lady of Victories. In the search, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) — a pontifical foundation dedicated to helping persecuted and oppressed Christians, including since the fall of the USSR extensive work in Ukraine helping Eastern Catholics to reclaim their liturgical traditions and practices of worship — gave a talk to the trustees of the CMA-UK on the devotional focus of Our Lady of Victories.

Through its work in Ukraine, ACN staff knew of a school of Eastern Catholic iconographers in Lviv, Ukraine. In Ukrainian, the Holy Mother is referred to as the *Bogoroditsa*, literally the birth-giver of God.

Icons hold profound reverence within the spiritual life of both the Catholic and Orthodox Church.

According to Elliot Mackin, assistant curator at The Icon Museum and Study Centre located in Clinton, Massachusetts, "An icon is a Christian image of a holy person or event, usually depicting Jesus Christ or his mother, Mary. They are venerated and used in prayer as a tool for communicating with the divine."

An idea began to form with the CMA-UK contingent to commission the first known icon of Our Lady of Victories. Amidst a raging war in Ukraine, this decision seemed especially poignant and was meant to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Money for the commission was raised through the help of the Catenians, an international body of Catholic laymen. ACN acted as an intermediary between the CMA and Ukrainian artist Olga Zhuravska of St. Anthony's Iconography Studio in Lviv.

An English-speaking intermediary given the fictitious name of Greg, to hide his identity from the Russians, was appointed by ACN to facilitate communication. Halfway through the painting of the icon, Greg was called to active duty in the Ukrainian armed forces. Instead of taking a year as planned, the painting of the icon extended to 18 months because Greg was injured in a bombing while fighting. As if this was not enough drama, according to ACN, the icon was not even known to be finished until it was en route to the U.K. in its dramatic, secret journey.

On the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, Oct. 7, 2025, the icon of Our Lady of Victories was blessed at St. Michael and St. George Cathedral in Aldershot, Hampshire. The blessing of the icon was led by

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London and Bishop Paul Mason of the Bishopric of the Forces, who is based at the cathedral, which serves the U.K. armed forces.

"It is wonderful that a project that has been so many months in the making has finally made it through to completion, fulfilling the vision of the CMA and all of us to find a renewed focus for prayer and solidarity with the people of Ukraine," said John Pontifex, head of press and public affairs at ACN (UK).

"Work on the icon continued despite the war that has so deeply scarred the face of Ukraine, and we pray that through the intercession of Our Lady of Victories, peace and justice may come to Ukraine."

Arrangements are being made by the CMA-UK to transport the icon to be venerated by service members wherever the need exists. It is hoped that Our Lady of Victory will be an object of contemplation and veneration by both British and Ukrainian forces long into the future.

Michele McAloon is a canon lawyer and a podcaster. Her website is bookclubs.com.

[Reviving a Sacred Tradition: The First Icon of Our Lady of Victories Commissioned for the Modern Soldier | National Catholic Register](#)



CATHOLIC MILITARY ASSOCIATION

The Catholic Military Association (CMA) is the official network for Defence Catholics. We support Catholics in the UK Armed Forces and have membership for serving personnel, veterans and other supporters. As a lay association of the faithful and registered charity (1205467) we cooperate to advance the faith across HM Forces. We work to inspire one-another in the Faith, growing through prayer and friendship. Find us at: catholicmilitaryassociation.org.uk and join for free to be included in our events and activities.

Ex Camino Harmony

A Catholic Pilgrimage



In March 2026, personnel from London District will undertake Ex Camino Harmony, a Catholic pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago, The English Way in northern Spain. Over five days, the team will walk approximately 111 kilometers from Ferrol to Santiago de Compostela, following in the footsteps of generations of pilgrims on the Way of St. James.

This pilgrimage is an opportunity to place faith at the centre of the journey. Through daily prayer, reflection, and fellowship, participants will be encouraged to deepen their relationship with Christ and grow in spiritual resilience. Walking together through physical challenge and quiet moments of contemplation, the team will support one another as a Christian community on pilgrimage.



The journey will conclude at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, home to the tomb of St. James the Apostle, where participants will give thanks to God for the grace of the pilgrimage. Ex Camino Harmony also seeks to raise awareness and support for the AGC and RCAM Corps Trusts, reflecting the Catholic call to service, charity, and care for others.

https://www.justgiving.com/team/camino-de-santiago-rcam?utm_medium=TE&utm_source=CL



Lent

- SACRIFICE
- REMEMBER
- PREPARE
- DESERT
- FOLLOW
- SEASON
- JESUS
- ASHES
- CROSS
- PRAY
- LOVE
- LENT



C X H U L L A E O J Q D K P L H G F D C Z J T H
P Q H Y N X Z W P D N W N R Y H H Q I F F U Z V
Z X E K O O R I A A C B T A L J F O N U P I M Z
U Z C D E S E R T J W J L Y K K Y K W N V H H K
C U Q K C P D T Q L Q E Y A R N G Y G G U L E E
R W K S X G A X G G M F Q D Z F F B R L F Q Q B
O E W B M I W S L Z V E G G Y B F R P U O G U A
S Q D T X C E A O A I O B E Q Q X Z L A L U Z L
S T N R B W I C V I P A C T T R A H D X L F K I
M U I J Z K U R E K R H B M J A Z A D A O D W M
K U J N T P F I I D J H A G Y R D U P U W Q L J
M J Y I S T H F H S S E A S O N X X M E B I X W
L E Y X C V G I U R G V Q L E H L A S H E S E S
E B V E X A E C T E S X P R E P A R E W X P Z H
Y F M L R E M E M B E R Q H H O L K C Z N K D E
D Q Y C D X U J G U M D W H C R U S U L N W Q D
C T N X V I B E Z C T V M N Y N J Q M E V W F Q
H S P D C I I J Z P Z H P N D D R E B N K X F Q
T Z I B H I P S X R N J A W P Q O C L T F R K J
E J K C J M V B I R G O C N S A Y E Y E H I I Y
K X W C B T D F J E S U S F V N X R V K R B W D
L B F L R E Y B N S B Y C T R F F V R Z G U B L
U A O I V N N V I V R Q S F R K K W S L W E Y L
A Y F M C G B U S A O M X T U R A V M E B B B Z

For answers, email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com Answers to Newsletter Issue 42: 1. Paul Mason, Southwark, 2. Mike Parker, Methodist, 3. RN, Army, RAF, 4. Army Regulation 165-1, Army Chaplain Corps Activities, states, Chaplains will not bear arms in combat or in unit combat skills training, 5. 1796, 6. Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist/120 - although there are also Sikh & Hindu, 7. King's Honorary Chaplain, 8. 10 & 2, 9. Reverend John Gamble, 10. Reverend James William Adams 1879, 11. Fr. Gerry Watson, killed by an IRA bomb in 1972, 12. 1920, 13. 2018, 14. Fr. Stephen Sharkey.

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.

Lay Chaplaincy at Waterways

Why Consider Waterways Chaplaincy as a Lay Chaplain?

Military life trains people to look out for others. Whether in barracks, on exercise or deployed, many of us recognise when someone is struggling, isolated or just needs a decent conversation. Waterways chaplaincy is a simple, practical way of using those instincts beyond work, without needing to be an expert or have all the answers.

Waterways lay chaplains spend time alongside people who live and work on canals and rivers boat owners, marina staff and volunteers. The role is mostly about being present: listening, checking in, and offering support when life feels heavy. There is no script and no pressure to "fix" anything. For anyone who has worked in welfare, leadership or supported others in the Military, this will feel familiar.

There are real benefits. It's a chance to develop listening and people skills in a very different setting, build trust with individuals who may not engage with formal services, and gain experience working with people from all backgrounds. It can also be a healthy contrast to the pace and structure of military life, while still feeling purposeful.

That said, it is not for everyone. The work is quiet and often unseen. There is no rank, no quick wins and no clear end state. The time commitment is a minimum of 3-4 hour a week, which needs to be managed sensibly alongside service commitments and approval from your Chain of Command.

Lay chaplains also need a strong sense of their own faith, as the role involves supporting others spiritually while respecting a wide range of beliefs. Comfort with working independently and knowing when to signpost is essential.

For serving personnel who value people, conversations and quiet impact and who are grounded in their faith, Waterways chaplaincy can be a rewarding way to give something back while still fully serving. It is not about preaching; it is about being human, consistent and trustworthy.

Full training provided.

Interested in finding out more? Get in touch with Corinna at corinnawwc@merciamarina.com.



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.

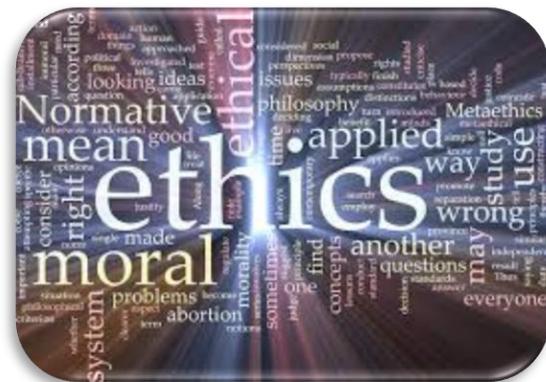
The aim is to have a closer relationship with God through prayer and how we live each day.

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

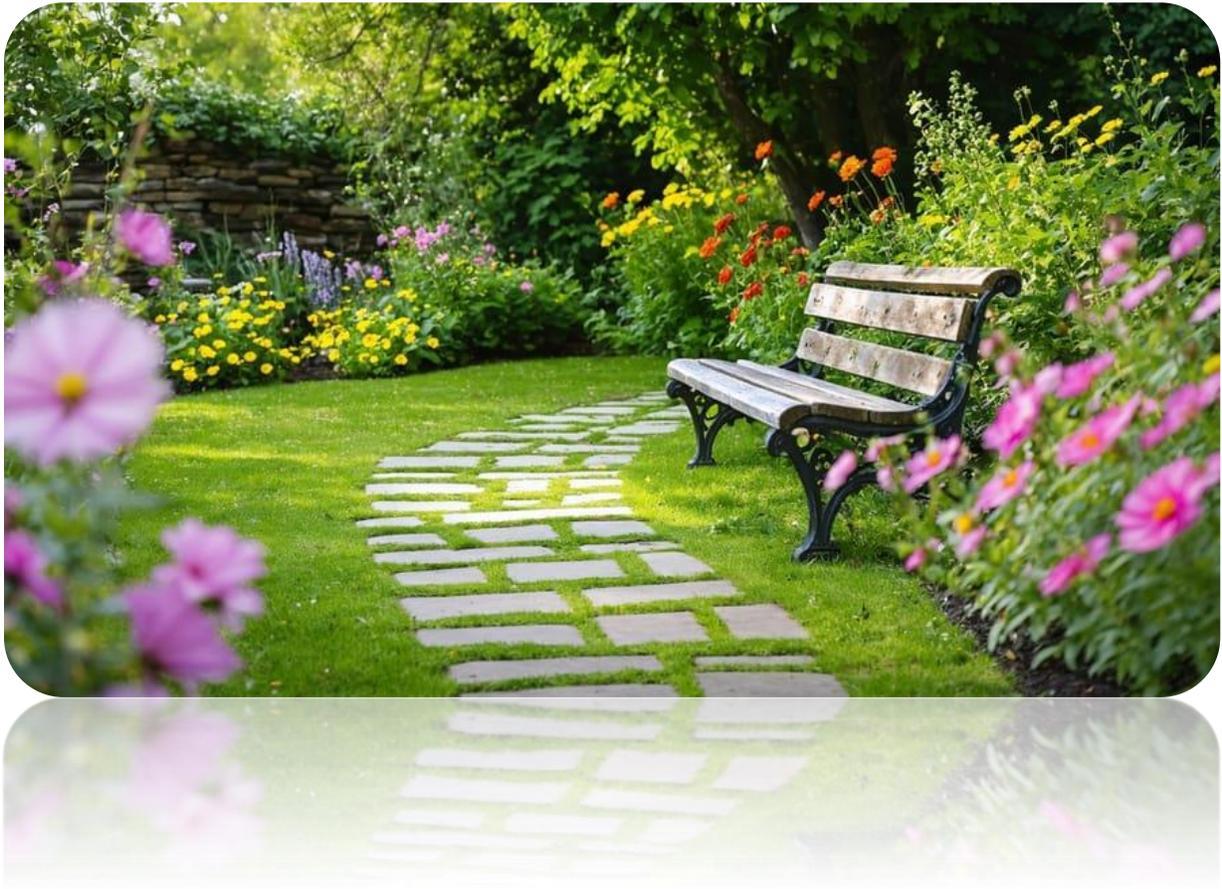


The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 21st May 2026, returning Monday 25th May 2026.

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

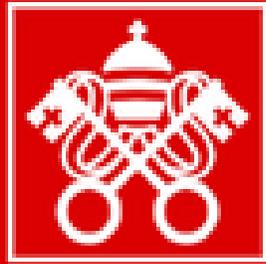


Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary?

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 everyone.

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 [Tweating 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 Feb & Mar

Ash Wednesday – 18th February

1st Sunday of Lent – 22nd February

2nd Sunday of Lent – 1st March

St David, Bishop, Patron of Wales
– 2nd March (Solemnity)

3rd Sunday of Lent – 8th March

4th Sunday of Lent – 15th March

St Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
– 19th March (Solemnity)

5th Sunday of Lent – 22nd March

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