



"Faith makes us open to the quiet presence of God at every moment of our lives in every person and in every situation." Pope Francis.



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

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



Welcome to Issue 37 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

We begin this edition of our newsletter by acknowledging the passing of our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis. His life of service, compassion and unwavering faith has left a profound impact on the Church and the world. He guided us with humility, mercy and a heart deeply attuned to the suffering of others. As we mourn his loss, we unite in prayer for the repose of his soul and for the Church as we look to the future with hope and trust in God's providence.

Pope Francis - (1936 - 2025)



Pope Francis sadly died on Easter Monday, April 21st, at the age of 88 at his residence in the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta. His Requiem Mass was celebrated on April 26th in St. Peter's Square, Rome and he was laid to rest at Santa Maria Maggiore.



Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY FATHER

FRANCIS

The first Pope of the Americas Jorge Mario Bergoglio hails from Argentina. The 76-year-old Jesuit Archbishop of Buenos Aires is a prominent figure throughout the continent yet remains a simple pastor who is deeply loved by his diocese, throughout which he has travelled extensively on the underground and by bus during the 15 years of his episcopal ministry.

"My people are poor, and I am one of them", he has said more than once, explaining his decision to live in an apartment and cook his own supper. He has always advised his priests to show mercy and apostolic courage and to keep their doors open to everyone. The worst thing that could happen to the Church, he has said on various occasions, "is what de Lubac called spiritual worldliness," which means, "being self-centred." And when he speaks of social justice, he calls people first of all to pick up the *Catechism*, to rediscover the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. His project is simple: if you follow Christ, you understand that "trampling upon a person's dignity is a serious sin".

Despite his reserved character — his official biography consists of only a few lines, at least until his appointment as Archbishop of Buenos Aires — he became a reference point because of the strong stances he took during the dramatic financial crisis that overwhelmed the country in 2001.

He was born in Buenos Aires on 17 December 1936, the son of Italian immigrants. His father Mario was an accountant employed by the railways and his mother Regina Sivori was a committed wife dedicated to raising their five children. He graduated as a chemical technician and then chose the path of the priesthood, entering the Diocesan Seminary of Villa Devoto. On 11 March 1958 he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. He completed his studies of the humanities in Chile and returned to Argentina in 1963 to graduate with a degree in philosophy from the Colegio de San José in San Miguel. From 1964 to 1965 he taught literature and psychology at Immaculate Conception College in Santa Fé and in 1966 he taught the same subject at the Colegio del Salvatore in Buenos Aires. From 1967-70 he studied theology and obtained a degree from the Colegio of San José.

On 13 December 1969 he was ordained a priest by Archbishop Ramón José Castellano. He continued his training between 1970 and 1971 at the University of Alcalá de Henares, Spain, and on 22 April 1973 made his final profession with the Jesuits. Back in Argentina, he was novice master at Villa Barilari, San Miguel; professor at the Faculty of Theology of San Miguel; consultor to the Province of the Society of Jesus and also Rector of the Colegio Máximo of the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology.

On 31 July 1973 he was appointed Provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina, an office he held for six years. He then resumed his work in the university sector and from 1980 to 1986 served once again as Rector of the Colegio de San José, as well as parish priest, again in San Miguel. In March 1986 he went to Germany to finish his doctoral thesis; his superiors then sent him to the Colegio del Salvador in Buenos Aires and next to the Jesuit Church in the city of Córdoba as spiritual director and confessor.

It was Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, who wanted him as a close collaborator. So, on 20 May 1992 Pope John Paul II appointed him titular Bishop of Auca and Auxiliary of Buenos Aires. On 27 May he received episcopal ordination from the Cardinal in the cathedral. He chose as his episcopal motto, *miserando atque eligendo*, and on his coat of arms inserted the *ihs*, the symbol of the Society of Jesus.

He gave his first interview as a bishop to a parish newsletter, *Estrellita de Belém*. He was immediately appointed Episcopal Vicar of the Flores district and on 21 December 1993 was also entrusted with the office of Vicar General of the Archdiocese. Thus, it came as no surprise when, on 3 June 1997, he was raised to the dignity of Coadjutor Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Not even nine months had passed when, upon the death of Cardinal Quarracino, he succeeded him on 28 February 1998, as Archbishop, Primate of Argentina, and Ordinary for Eastern-rite faithful in Argentina who have no Ordinary of their own rite.

Three years later at the Consistory of 21 February 2001, John Paul ii created him Cardinal, assigning him the title of San Roberto Bellarmino. He asked the faithful not to come to Rome to celebrate his creation as Cardinal but rather to donate to the poor what they would have spent on the journey. As Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University of Argentina, he is the author of the books: *Meditaciones para religiosos* (1982), *Reflexiones sobre la vida apostólica* (1992) and *Reflexiones de esperanza* (1992).

In October 2001 he was appointed General Relator to the 10th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Episcopal Ministry. This task was entrusted to him at the last minute to replace Cardinal Edward Michael Egan, Archbishop of New York, who was obliged to stay in his homeland because of the terrorist attacks on September 11th. At the Synod he placed particular emphasis on "the prophetic mission of the bishop," his being a "prophet of justice", his duty to "preach ceaselessly" the social doctrine of the Church and also "to express an authentic judgement in matters of faith and morals".

All the while Cardinal Bergoglio was becoming ever more popular in Latin America. Despite this, he never relaxed his sober approach or his strict lifestyle, which some have defined as almost "ascetic". In this spirit of poverty, he declined to be appointed as President of the Argentine Bishops' Conference in 2002, but three years later he was elected and then, in 2008, reconfirmed for a further three-year mandate. Meanwhile in April 2005 he took part in the Conclave in which Pope Benedict XVI was elected.

As Archbishop of Buenos Aires — a diocese with more than three million inhabitants — he conceived of a missionary project based on communion and evangelization. He had four main goals: open and brotherly communities, an informed laity playing a lead role, evangelization efforts addressed to every inhabitant of the city, and assistance to the poor and the sick. He aimed to reevangelize Buenos Aires, "taking into account those who live there, its structure and its history". He asked priests and lay people to work together. In September 2009 he launched the solidarity campaign for the bicentenary of the Independence of the country. Two hundred charitable agencies are to be set up by 2016. And on a continental scale, he expected much from the impact of the message of the Aparecida Conference in 2007, to the point of describing it as the "*Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Latin America".

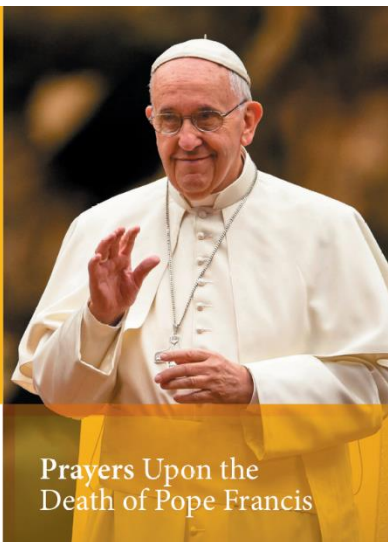
Until the beginning of the recent *sede vacante*, he was a member of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Congregation for the Clergy, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

He was elected Supreme Pontiff on 13 March 2013.

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Prayers for the successor of Pope Francis

O God, who chose your servant, in succession to the Apostle Peter as shepherd of the whole flock, look favourably on the supplications of your people and grant that, as Vicar of Christ on earth, he may confirm his brethren and that the whole Church may be in communion with him in the bond of unity, love and peace, so that in you, the shepherd of souls, all may know the truth and attain life eternal. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Prayers Upon the Death of Pope Francis

Prayer for Francis

O God, faithful rewarder of souls, grant that your departed servant Pope Francis, whom you made successor of Peter and shepherd of your Church, may happily enjoy for ever in your presence in heaven the mysteries of your grace and compassion, which he faithfully ministered on earth. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Eternal rest, grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.

May he rest in peace. Amen.

May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

Psalm 120

I lift up my eyes to the mountains: from where shall come my help? My help shall come from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

May he never allow you to stumble! Let him sleep not your guard. No, he sleeps not nor slumbers, Israel's guard.

The Lord is your guard and your shade; at your right side he stands. By day the sun shall not smite you nor the moon in the night.

The Lord will guard you from evil, he will guard your soul. The Lord will guard your going and coming both now and for ever.

Canticle of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis) (Luke 2:29-32)

At last, all-powerful Master, you give leave to your servant to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to Israel, your people.



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Psalm 120 and Canticle of Simeon (*Nunc Dimittis*) © 1963
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What happens after the Pope dies?



Following the death of a Pope, the Catholic Church observes a traditional nine-day period of mourning known as Novendiale. During this time, the Vatican enters a period known as sede vacante, meaning "the seat is vacant" - marking a temporary absence of a pontiff. Leadership of the Church is assumed by the College of Cardinals, though no major decisions or changes are made until a new Pope is elected. Approximately two to three weeks after the funeral, the Church begins the process of selecting a new Pope, through the Conclave, a highly confidential gathering of the College of Cardinals held within the Sistine Chapel.

The Conclave follows strict protocols:

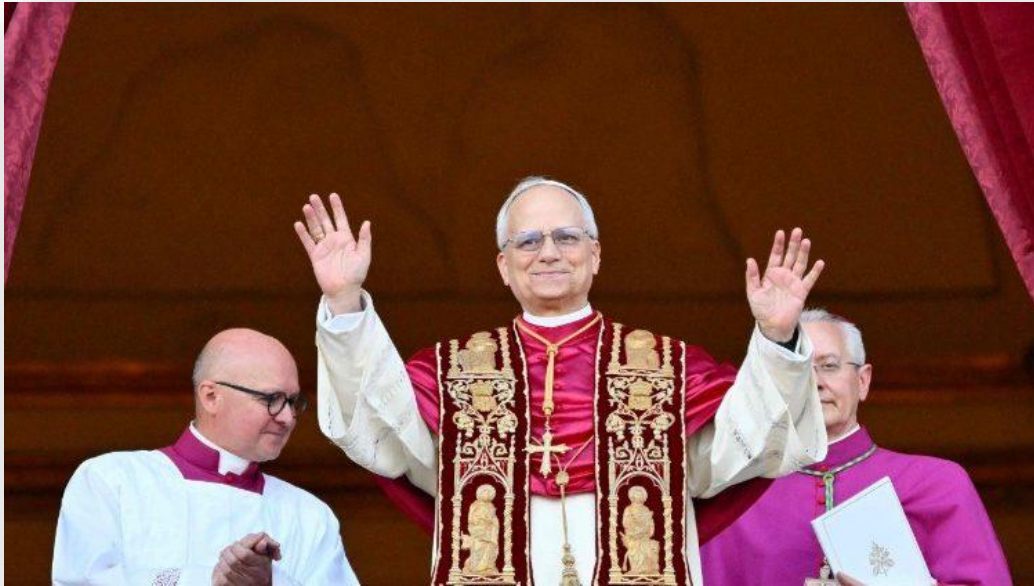
1. The Sistine Chapel is sealed to ensure absolute secrecy.
2. Only Cardinals under the age of 80 are eligible to vote.
3. Voting occurs in multiple rounds, with a two-thirds majority required to elect a new Pope.
4. If no candidate is chosen, ballots are burned with chemicals to produce black smoke, signalling an inconclusive vote.
5. White smoke signals the successful election of a new Pope.

Once a new Pope is elected, he accepts the role, chooses a papal name, and is formally introduced to the world. From the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, the senior cardinal deacon announces the historic words: "Habemus Papam" - "We have a Pope."



"Habemus Papam"

Pope Leo XIV



Following two days of ballots, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost of the United States has been elected the 267th pope, the new leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics. Robert Prevost, 69, from Chicago, Illinois, is the first ever pope from the United States. He will be known as Leo XIV.

The first Augustinian Pope, Robert Prevost - now Leo XIV - is the second Roman Pontiff from the Americas after Pope Francis. However, unlike Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the 69-year-old Robert Francis Prevost is from the northern part of the American continent, though he spent many years as a missionary in Peru before being elected head of the Augustinians for two consecutive terms.



The new Bishop of Rome was born on 14th September 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, to Louis Marius Prevost, of French and Italian descent, and Mildred Martínez, of Spanish descent. He has two brothers, Louis Martín and John Joseph. He spent his childhood and adolescence with his family and studied first at the Minor Seminary of the Augustinian Fathers and then at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, where in 1977 he earned a Degree in Mathematics and also studied Philosophy. On 1st September of the same year, he entered the novitiate of the Order of Saint Augustine (O.S.A.) in Saint Louis, in the Province of Our Lady of Good Counsel of Chicago and made his first profession on 2nd September 1978. On 29th August 1981, he made his solemn vows. He received his theological education at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. At the age of 27, he was sent by his superiors to Rome to study Canon Law at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum).

In Rome, he was ordained a priest on 19th June 1982, at the Augustinian College of Saint Monica by Monsignor Jean Jadot, then Pro-President of the Pontifical Council for Non-Christians, now the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue. Prevost obtained his licentiate in 1984; and the following year, while preparing his doctoral thesis, was sent to the Augustinian mission in Chulucanas, Piura, Peru (1985-1986). In 1987, he defended his doctoral thesis on "The Role of the Local Prior in the Order of Saint Augustine" and was appointed vocation director and missions director of the Augustinian Province of "Mother of Good Counsel" in Olympia Fields, Illinois (USA). The following year, he joined the mission in Trujillo, also in Peru, as director of the joint formation project for Augustinian candidates from the vicariates of Chulucanas, Iquitos, and Apurímac. Over the course of eleven years, he served as prior of the community (1988-1992), formation director (1988-1998), and instructor for professed members (1992-1998), and in the Archdiocese of Trujillo as judicial vicar (1989-1998) and professor of Canon Law, Patristics, and Moral Theology at the Major Seminary "San Carlos y San Marcelo." At the same time, he was also entrusted with the pastoral care of Our Lady Mother of the Church, later established as the parish of Saint Rita (1988-1999), in a poor suburb of the city, and was parish administrator of Our Lady of Monserrat from 1992 to 1999.



In 1999, he was elected Provincial Prior of the Augustinian Province of "Mother of Good Counsel" in Chicago, and two and a half years later, the Ordinary General Chapter of the Order of Saint Augustine, elected him as Prior General, confirming him in 2007 for a second term. In October 2013, he returned to his Augustinian Province in Chicago, serving as director of formation at the Saint Augustine Convent, first counselor, and provincial vicar, roles he held until Pope Francis appointed him on 3rd November 2014, as Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Chiclayo, elevating him to the episcopal dignity as Titular Bishop of the Diocese of Sufar. He entered the Diocese on 7th November, in the presence of Apostolic Nuncio James Patrick Green, who ordained him Bishop just over a month later, on 12th December, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the Cathedral of Saint Mary. His episcopal motto is "In Illo uno unum"—words pronounced by Saint Augustine in a sermon on Psalm 127 to explain that "although we Christians are many, in the one Christ we are one."

On 26th September 2015, he was appointed Bishop of Chiclayo by Pope Francis. In March 2018, he was elected second vice-president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, where he also served as a member of the Economic Council and as president of the Commission for Culture and Education. In 2019, Pope Francis appointed him a member of the Congregation for the Clergy (13th July 2019), and in 2020, a member of the Congregation for Bishops (November 21). Meanwhile, on 15th April 2020, he was also appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Callao. On 30th January 2023, the Pope called him to Rome as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, promoting him to the rank of Archbishop.

On 30th September of that year Pope Francis created Prevost Cardinal in the Consistory and assigned him the Diaconate of Saint Monica. He officially took possession of his Titular church on 28th January 2024. As head of the Dicastery, he participated in the Pope's most recent Apostolic Journeys and in both the first and second sessions of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, held in Rome from 4th - 29th October 2023, and from 2nd - 27th October 2024, respectively. Meanwhile, on 4th October, 2023, Pope Francis appointed him as a member of the Dicasteries for Evangelization (Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches), for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Eastern Churches, for the Clergy, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for Culture and Education, for Legislative Texts, and of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State. Finally, on 6th February 6 of this year, the Argentine Pope promoted him to the Order of Bishops, granting him the title of the Suburbicarian Church of Albano. Three days later, on 9th February, he celebrated the Mass presided over by Pope Francis in Saint Peter's Square for the Jubilee of the Armed Forces, the second major event of the Holy Year of Hope. During the most recent hospitalisation of his predecessor at the "Gemelli" hospital Prevost presided over the Rosary for Pope Francis's health in Saint Peter's Square on 3rd March.



Information obtained from: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en.html>



Lord, source of eternal life and truth, give to your shepherd a spirit of courage and right judgment, a spirit of knowledge and love. By governing with fidelity those entrusted to his care, may he, as successor to the Apostle Peter and Vicar of Christ, build your Church into a sacrament of unity, love and peace for all the world. Amen.

St. Joan of Arc Catterick Garrison



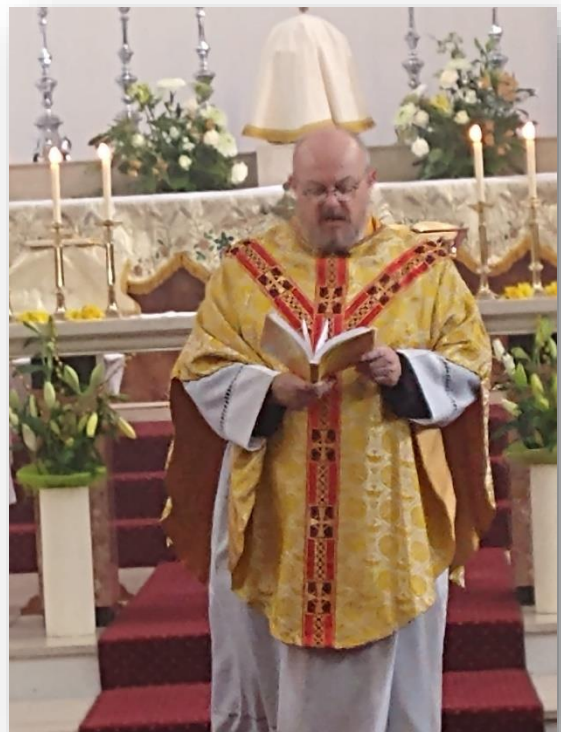
A busy weekend for Fr. Kevin Dow and the faith community at St. Joan of Arc, Catterick Garrison. On Holy Saturday morning, Fr. Kevin blessed the Easter food in the Polish tradition.



Fr. Kevin celebrated the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening at St. Joan of Arc.



Fr. Kevin celebrating Mass on Easter Sunday at St. Joan of Arc.



Deacon John Power joins the Lay Community of St. Benedict at their Easter gathering in Cefn Lea, Mid-Wales.



I BELIEVE IN ONE HOLY CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Fr. Terkura Igbe, who is currently deployed in Estonia, writes an article about his experiences since becoming a military chaplain.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is so deliberate in its teaching and introduces believers to one of the binding forces in the Church - 'The Profession of Faith.' At the very initial stage of coming to faith, the Catholic believer is exposed to this fundamental teaching to be learnt, believed and lived. Through the profession of faith, the Christian believer moves into a deep affirmation of some essential characteristics of the Church as understood by many Christian traditions, particularly Catholicism; Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, and some Protestant denominations, though except that their interpretations can have nuances.

This little write-up is neither a catechetical nor a theological work. This is intended to share with you some of my lived experiences since my arrival in theatre.

To the extent to which the demands and the policy while on deployment permitted and having got a fair idea of the battle rhythm, I took the initiative to contact the Bishop of Tallinn - Bishop Philippe Jourdan, shortly after I arrived in Estonia.

At the first instance, I sent him an email introducing myself and what a joy that I felt as I read through his reply. Without hesitation, he welcomed me in his Diocese. Since then, I have been in touch with Bishop Philippe.

My deployment coincided with the season of Lent. It was a blessing to celebrate Ash Wednesday at SS. Patrick and George in Tidworth with Fr. PJ. The Christian community there is vibrant and well organised. Families come together; everyone is welcome and have a place in the community. The singing makes a huge difference as it enriches the liturgy. Fr. PJ kept making announcements about my imminent departure. For the last time, on Ash Wednesday, 5th March, he still announced to the whole assembly that I would be deploying on 6th March 2025 and asked all those present to pray for me.



Lent in theatre has been very different. Even though there is a chapel in Tapa camp, the assembly is different, and the ambiance is not the same. While serving the people in camp, I was still conscious of the obligations of the season of Lent.

Deep into the season of Lent, I wrote to Bishop Philippe and asked if I could join his presbyterium for Chrism mass. He kindly accepted and equally invited me to join him and his priests for lunch at the monastery of Pirita (- Merivälja Str 18) on 16th April and then later at 1700hrs for Chrism mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Tallinn. This was a great time of fraternity and while I missed being with my fellow brother chaplains at the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. George in Aldershot.



Away from Aldershot, I was privileged to enjoy some of the aspects of church life during the Holy week. I shared and expressed moments of my priestly calling. I renewed my priestly promises together with the priests of the Diocese of Tallinn in the presence of the Bishop. This is an aspect of what it means to profess belief in 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.' The Church is intended to be united, set apart for God, universal in its reach and possessing the fullness of faith and built upon the foundation laid by the Apostles. This in a sense has significant implications for understanding the nature and mission of the Church. This belief shapes how many understand their faith and their relationship with other believers across the globe and throughout history. As Catholics, we are never strangers in any part of the world wherever there is a Catholic church.

Chaplain General's Conference & CF4 Forum

30 Apr - 1 May 2025

A step forward in a diversity of pastoral service and readiness to serve!

Written by Fr. Volodymyr Sampara - Chaplain 2nd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment

All chaplains who have joined the Royal Chaplains' Department during last 5 years are welcomed to participate in the CF4 forum to update and upgrade their knowledge, understanding and widening their horizon of pastoral service. We were delighted to get a tiny taste of spiritual leadership presented by the Jewish chaplain and a chaplain from the Islamic community. Staying at Beckett House always provides spiritual rest and recovery in the company of brothers and sisters in ministry. The daily morning and evening prayers, led by chaplains from various denominations, enriched and deepened our worship experience. There were so many questions put to our lecturers that they didn't manage to answer to all of them. During both days of our Forum meeting, we felt a profound spiritual connection between us.



How to invest in self-development of spiritual, pastoral, religious and physical skills and be ready for unexpected? That was the key point of the Chaplain General, Michael Parker and all guests who delivered their messages to us. It reminded us of a fragment from the Gospel to be vigilant because you do not know at what time a thief can sneak in and rob your house. I love the moment when I see my friends from the department and can say "Hello" to them. Generally, we do not see each other very often. Sometimes, it is the entire year of busy work and service, but we feel like it was "yesterday" last time we met. Listening to the lectures, we reflected about the high possibility of deployment to the Eastern Europe or Ukraine and how we can support our troops in that situation of war.



What a Blessing it was for all of us to host the Ukrainian chaplain, Fr. Andrii! He was happy to listen and understand our willingness to support our Ukrainian friends in their fight for freedom and withstand the atrocity of war. It was a wonderful time for him to recover and recharge his spiritual "batteries" whilst being with us. We pray for Ukraine and for the Victory! We all are one Heart and one Soul with Ukraine!



65th International Military Pilgrimage

Lourdes, 15 – 19 May 2025



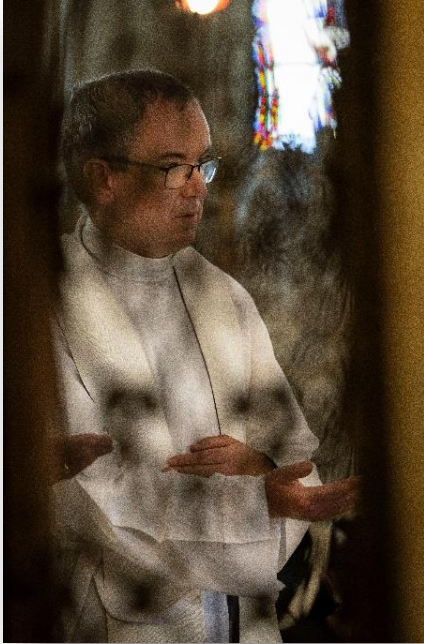
The 65th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes took place from Thursday 15th May to Monday 19th May under the theme "*With Mary, Pilgrims of Hope*". Military pilgrims from around the world attended in a spirit of unity, fraternity, and camaraderie. The United Kingdom's contingent participated alongside Bishop Paul Mason, the Principal Roman Catholic Chaplains as well as other military chaplains and service personnel in this special event which provided an opportunity to not only strengthen spiritual bonds but also to positively represent the Armed Forces within the wider community.

The following articles are photographs and reflections from those who attended the Pilgrimage. Thank you to Flt Lt Luke Bluer and others who provided many of the photographs of the IMP.



65th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, 2025

Fr. John Moriarty, Chaplain 1 Rifles



Over the weekend 15-19 May 2025, 330 British personnel travelled to Lourdes in the South of France for the 65th International Military Pilgrimage. They joined 17,000 personnel from 41 nations gathered at the Catholic shrine dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Lourdes has been an important pilgrimage site since the nineteenth century, and the first Military Pilgrimage was in 1958 when the French invited German troops to join them on pilgrimage as an act of reconciliation. Today the International Military Pilgrimage continues this tradition, seeking to build connections and understanding between personnel of many nations. Rooted in the Roman Catholic Tradition, the military pilgrimage is open to personnel of all faiths and none, another expression of the desire to build understanding and connection between people.

The UK contingent was proud to represent our Armed Forces in Lourdes, with personnel representing all three services, CCF Cadets and veterans attending. We were delighted that The Band of the Royal Yeomanry joined us on pilgrimage this year, leading the contingent through the streets of Lourdes as we marched in procession to the events of the programme, and performing at church services, formal and international engagement events. Memorably the band were joined by the Pipes and Drums of the Irish Defence Force when the UK contingent hosted a reception for representatives of many of the other nations in Lourdes.

For many pilgrims, this was also an opportunity for personal growth, or an opportunity to address challenges in their past. One service person wrote about her experience:

My first experience on the military pilgrimage in Lourdes was deeply moving and unforgettable. Surrounded by fellow servicemen and women from around the world, I felt a profound sense of unity, peace, and spiritual renewal. The serene atmosphere of Lourdes, coupled with the shared prayers and ceremonies, offered a powerful reminder of hope, healing, and the strength of faith, even in the face of adversity. It was a humbling and enriching journey that strengthened both my spirit and sense of purpose.

Pilgrims were supported by military chaplains from all three services and from a wide variety of Christian traditions, including this year Revd. Anthony Feltham-White, Deputy Chaplain General (Army). Many took the opportunity for a quiet conversation to reflect on their lives or to discuss issues that maybe hadn't come to the fore beforehand.

The pilgrimage has been an opportunity to build connections with others, from all around the world, to reflect on our lives, and to represent the UK in an international setting. One pilgrim commented that they were 'going home exhausted but spiritually renewed.'

And a UK team won the sporting competition, itself another opportunity to connect with others! "Enjoyed: all elements, especially the Anglophone Mass due to the holiness of the location and the fresh air and open-air singing adding to the feeling of purity. Also, the sporting event as it allowed a more direct participation with an individual who comes to Lourdes for healing, providing a prominent reminder as to why pilgrims do come to Lourdes outside of the IMP.

Favourite Part: Going to the baths and being fully immersed for the first time in years and the sacrament of reconciliation with the Bishop of the Armed Forces. Has it changed anything: I feel like I've had another spiritual MOT and am ready to conduct another year as a better Catholic."

Capt. Patrick "Paddy" Denny, 33 Engr Regt (EOD&S) wrote:

This was my first International Military Pilgrimage, and it was unequivocally one of the best things I have done in my Army Career to date. It was great meeting likeminded people of my own faith, and I well and truly felt supported by Fr. Nick Gosnell and Fr. Stephen Sharkey in my attendance on the IMP. It was a great opportunity for me to practice my faith with colleagues from the British Armed Forces, and other, international Colleagues.

I came away from the Pilgrimage feeling spiritually refreshed and would love to attend next year. It is the embodiment of the Moral Component of Fighting Power.



Revd. Ian Rodgers, SO1 Chaplains, Career Management wrote:



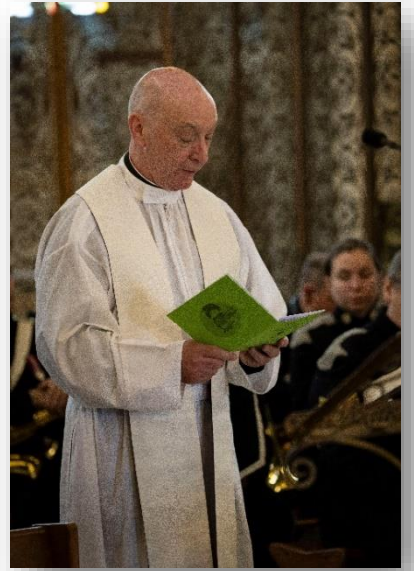
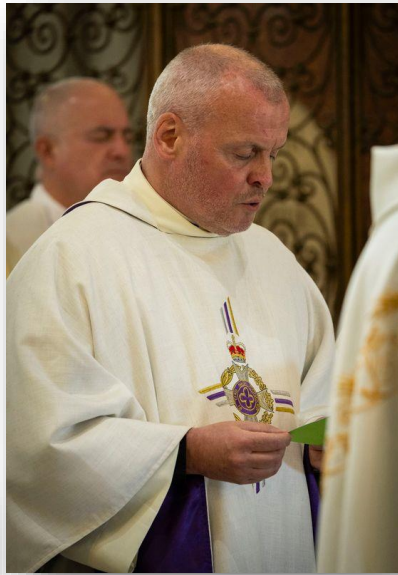
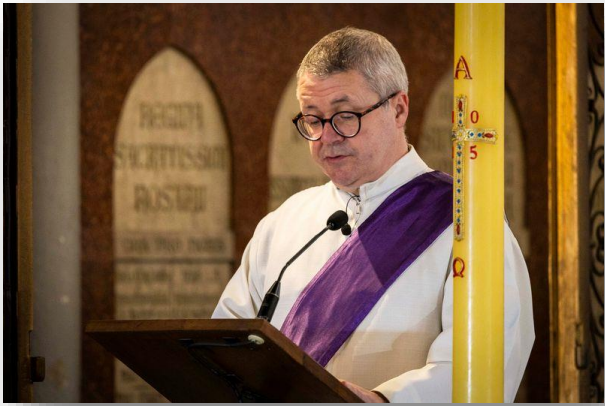
I will start by saying what a privilege it was to be invited to attend the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, and a huge thank you to those who organised the event. It was the first time I had been to Lourdes and also the first time going on pilgrimage with service personnel.

I must say that Lourdes is a place of profound contrasts. I found my visit to the Grotto to be peaceful and profound, to run my hands along the rocks worn smooth by the touch of pilgrims who have gone before me and knowing that pilgrims who follow me will do the same. It reminded me of the gospel reading for the Sunday we were there, that we are to love one another as Jesus has loved us. It also reminded me that as Christians we are part of a community that spans time as well as the here and now. That peace was contrasted with the constant noise of marching soldiers and the music from the many military bands, and from the noise and excitement of over 16000 soldiers from all over the world in the opening ceremony at the St. Pius X Basilica.

The pilgrimage was both exciting and full of energy, as young soldiers met their contemporaries in a relaxed environment and exchanged greetings and patches and most importantly made friends. It also offered the chance to pause and contemplate as we took the time to reflect on our lives and the areas in which we need the healing of the Lord. It was an encounter with the simple beauty of the faith of the pilgrims in the torch light procession and in the saying of the rosary at the grotto, and the more elaborate beauty of the lower basilica, contrasted as it was with the gaudiness of many of the souvenirs and keepsakes to be found in the shops around the tomb. These contrasts and many other examples I could mention, were brought together in one place and it was that place that gave the pilgrims the opportunity offer the contrasts of their own lives to God.

Those contrasts are an authentic reflection of what it means to be a human being, and it is that which will live longest with as I reflect on the pilgrimage. All of life was brought before Jesus and offered, and he received from us and gave it back transformed, healed and filled with peace. In a final contrast I return both exhausted and yet profoundly refreshed.





Revd. Rob Bernie (far left in photo), **Chaplain with 6 Regt RLC** shares his experience with us:



I had the opportunity this year to attend the IMP at Lourdes, France and found it to be everything and more than I expected from the well organised travel, excellent accommodation and food to a wonderful programme of participation and events. As a Chaplain it was good to be with our soldiers, air crew and sailors as we soaked up the international atmosphere of thousands of different soldiers from all over the world. That unique military camaraderie went beyond language and cultural differences and the sight of thousands of military and their bands all participating with mutual respect, fun and laughter was an amazing experience. From the spiritual aspect I found the services beautiful, enriching and meaningful and it was great to follow in the footsteps of that wonderful young Saint, Saint Bernadette and to be part of something that was memorable for all the right reasons.

A Chaplain recalls a meaningful moment from the pilgrimage:

I led a group through the Upper Stations of the Cross and when we came to the Station where Jesus dies on the Cross one of the group became quite moved and walked to one side. When I joined them, they were quite upset and explained they had experienced a recent and tragic loss of a family member. We spoke about death of a loved one never being good and the quite dreadful emotions of grief and despair that can accompany such a loss. It turned out that both of us had experienced a similar loss of a family member in equally sudden circumstances. We spoke about ways in which we may remember our loved one in a positive light, and we reflected on ways that we may feel close to the person we had lost. The conversation moved to how we both had noticed a red robin appear at times when we are thinking of the one we have lost. Suddenly a red robin appeared and sat between the two of us. The red chest of the tiny bird so vibrant and red. Both of us and the person who accompanied us were moved into silence.



At the start of our pilgrimage, Bishop Paul remarked about the different ways that God speaks to us and to be open to that during the pilgrimage: especially into spaces of our heart and mind. Reflecting after this pilgrimage, I felt that moment that we had shared in front of Jesus, dead on The Cross was a sacred time a manner in which neither of us could speak or explain; or wanted to. It was very much a moment of the 'still small voice of God.' Kings 19:11-13.



My pilgrimage to Lourdes as part of the British Army contingent was a deeply moving and spiritual experience. It offered me an opportunity to step away from the noise of everyday life and to reconnect with my faith in a profound and personal way. It was a unique and meaningful experience to take part in such a spiritual journey, surrounded by fellow service personnel from across the world. It was heartening to see people from different nations and backgrounds all united in faith and purpose.

One of the most powerful moments for me was taking part in the Stations of the Cross. Walking the path and reflecting on each stage of Jesus' journey to the crucifixion helped me to contemplate the meaning of sacrifice, suffering, and hope - values that resonate strongly with military life. It was both humbling and uplifting to share this journey with others, each of us united in prayer and purpose.

I also found great peace in the Adoration Chapel. Spending time in quiet reflection before the Blessed Sacrament gave me a sense of calm and clarity. It reminded me of the importance of silence, presence, and trust in God's love and guidance.

Lourdes is a place of healing, both physical and spiritual, and I am truly grateful for the experience. It has strengthened my spiritual life and reminded me of the shared humanity and compassion that connect us all, regardless of nationality or uniform.



Reflection on the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes – SSgt (SSI) M Glass RAPTC

As someone who identifies as a Christian but is far from practicing, Lourdes offered something rare, the opportunity to be vulnerable. As soldiers, we are trained to be strong, composed, and resilient. Vulnerability is often seen as a weakness, something to be hidden or overcome. But in Lourdes, surrounded by fellow servicemen and women from around the world, I discovered that vulnerability can be a source of strength.



Listening to others share their personal stories of loss, trauma, faith, and healing, I realised that the struggles we face are not unique. Whether we wear different uniforms or speak different languages, many of us carry similar burdens. The pain of separation from loved ones, the weight of responsibility, and the scars both visible and invisible are shared experiences.

What struck me most was the sense of unity. Lourdes became a sacred space where rank and nationality faded into the background. We stood together not just as soldiers, but as human beings seeking peace, understanding, and hope. I learned the path to healing is not one we must walk alone. It is best travelled with the support of others through open conversation and mutual compassion.

One of the most powerful moments for me was the Marian candlelight procession at the Basilica. Seeing 17,000 people holding candles, walking under the cover of darkness while singing, was an experience I will never forget. Lourdes reminded me that strength is not just about resilience. It's also about the courage to open up, to listen, and to let others in. It's a strength that builds bridges, fosters peace, and brings light into the darkest corners of our lives.



As LCpl Ndung'u said, "The pilgrimage was a transformative experience. It allowed reflections of both personal and spiritual growth. The shared experiences helped me foster a sense of community with strangers. It led me to a deeper appreciation for the beauty and wonder of nature."

On reflection I believe Lourdes is not just for the religious to connect with their faith. Anyone fortunate enough to attend the pilgrimage will find something meaningful about themselves, and about the strength we find in one another.

Colonel Paolo Capanni – Deputy Secretary General, AMI said that “As Pilgrims of Hope during this Jubilee Year, the 65th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes was particularly special, and was a wonderful opportunity to renew our faith in the company of friends, both military and civilian, from around the world.”



The Venerable Stephen Dunwoody, Archdeacon for the Army, ACG HQ Reg Comd wrote, I write to communicate my sincere thanks for the opportunity of joining you and your people as a guest during the 65th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

On returning, I have reflected with thanksgiving on the kindness, grace and fraternal love shown by the entire team. In particular, I think Fr. Stephen was a superb lead as your PRCC and Fr. Kevin showed great attention to detail and sensitivity in supporting me to deliver the Anglican Eucharist at the hotel.

I am privileged to have been given the opportunity to share the pilgrimage and remain very grateful for the generosity shown. Generosity, both in terms of hospitality and practical care but also generosity of spirit, particularly evidenced by the inclusive spirit shown to those of us from other ecclesial bodies.



The 2025 International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes: A Call to Faith & Service

"Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand." (Ephesians 6:11)

Written by: **Revd. Phil Nightingale CF (British Army – Padre 1st Battalion Scots Guards)**



Christian service personnel of the British Armed Forces are called to a dual vocation: to defend our nation with honour and to uphold the values of our faith. The International Military Pilgrimage (PMI – Pelerinage Militaire International) presents a unique annual opportunity for UK military personnel to unite with other serving members from across the globe in prayer and reflection, drawing strength from both shared faith and purpose, with a fair amount of common 'evening fellowship' blended in!

Since its inception in 1958, the PMI has brought together those across the army, navy and air force from an array of nations to the beautiful and revered site of Lourdes, France. This pilgrimage is more than a religious gathering; it is a powerful testament to the intersection of military service and Christian devotion. Each year, many thousands of uniformed believers gather in solidarity, proudly representing their respective nations through colourful marching processions led by their skilled military bands as well as at services held across Lourdes throughout the pilgrimage. In addition to this is the famed and moving torchlight procession; the latter of which lends an unparalleled sense of unity amidst the beauty of massed glowing candlelight testifying to a brotherhood beyond borders.

The PMI affords an opportunity to remember that our strength does not come solely from training or weaponry, but from God. As Psalm 144:1 declares, *"Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle."* Walking the hillside together for the 'Stations of the Cross' stirred afresh the call of Christ to sacrifice, remembering the famous verse from John 15:13 inscribed upon many a Cenotaph: *"Greater love hath no one than this, that they lay down their life for their friends."*



Many pilgrims are active-duty personnel seeking spiritual renewal before forthcoming deployments or on-going service, while others come seeking spiritual and emotional (even physical) healing from often-unseen wounds. At the opening ceremony Paul Mason, the Bishop to the Forces, challenged us all to allow space for the healing of wounds that we may already be well aware of, but also for those of which we may need to become more honestly conscious - a battle-hardened soldier may bear a battle-wearied soul as both the literal battlefield of conflict and the metaphorical battlefield of life can inflict inner injuries that only God can heal. As Psalm 147:3 teaches: *"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."*

Just as we train for physical readiness, we must also strengthen our souls. The PMI 2025, blessed with the spiritual guidance of Bishop Paul and his able Chaplaincy team, offered a sacred space to lay down our burdens, seek intercession, and return to our duties with renewed purpose.

For those considering attending in 2026, consider this - nowhere else will the opportunity be given for such a transformative fusion of faith and fellowship, spirituality and socialising, prayer and procession, all over the delights of shared French cuisine in the sun-soaked serene beauty of the Pyrenean foothills.

In summary, to all those considering, consider no longer, rather, in faith, commit and come.



HCPT

*An article written by
Fr. Daren Brown, Retired Army Chaplain*

As the reader no doubt knows, HCPT (originally called Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust, now changed to Hosanna House and Children's Pilgrimage Trust), founded by Dr Michael Strode in 1956, is a series of pilgrimages throughout the year for a variety of different groups. The main event is the Easter Week pilgrimage and is the largest with over 1,000 pilgrims. The underpinning ethic of HCPT is to treat its pilgrims (whomever they are) as "honoured guests along with the rest of the people they travelled with...[promoting] a truly shared pilgrimage experience" (HCPT.org). To honour this ethic the guests are accommodated in hotels and are treated with care and respect, particularly focusing on those with disabilities.

With this in the mind and intent of the helpers on the pilgrimage, great care is taken to continually maintain focus on the children and make sure that they are given a spiritual experience and have fun at the same time. In a biblical sense, it is the children who show the qualities of a follower of Christ by expressing trust, dependence, faith, innocence and love. Christ said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14). The children, therefore, become an inspiration allowing their genuine humanity to shine with the qualities of saints. To treat them as such then, the helpers themselves show their own commitments to loving their neighbour in a very intensive manner, looking after the children as models of Christian virtue after the example of Christ himself, who both cares for children and recognises their value as an example to His disciples.



Group 720 is the Regional Support Group whose purpose is to help HCPT Easter groups from the Armed Forces. Our main task is logistical in preparing the various event sites ready for the groups to go through. However, we are also individually assigned to another Armed Forces group in order to assist them, especially when they travel to visit venues. This year I accompanied Group 182 on their visit to the Pyrénées Animal Park. The children naturally loved this trip to see a variety of animals and were over the moon to be able to go into some of the animal enclosures to feed the animals. For some they had never seen an animal so close.

Other fun activities were a mixture of faith-based themes and arts and crafts. All the events were produced to give the children opportunities to experience Lourdes and explore the Catholic Christian faith. Various religious events were included to help the children experience this too, including a whole HCPT Mass in the underground basilica which involved lots of music and visual acts to communicate the Gospel and other elements of the Mass.



Anyone interested in volunteering for this HCPT Easter Week pilgrimage can contact one of the Forces groups in the following link <https://www.rcbishopricforces.org.uk/hcpt>.



St. Patrick's Garrison RC Church Tidworth



Sunday 25th May was a special day for four young parishioners at Tidworth's Catholic Garrison Church, as they celebrated their First Holy Communion during the 9.30am Mass. Having prepared for this special day with Catechists Ann Birch and Zena Byrne, Adi, Ted, Nicholas and Moses joyfully received Jesus in the Holy Eucharist for the first time from Fr. PJ O'Driscoll.

It was such a joy to see the church full with the children's families, friends and the usual Sunday congregation to share this moment with them. The Fijian families presented Fr. PJ with a traditional garland which he wore during the Mass.

Celebrations continued afterwards with tea, coffee and a wonderful cake kindly arranged by one of the parents.

Please keep these children, their families and friends very much in our prayers.



A recent Baptism at St. Patrick's Church, Tidworth.



Can you identify these quotations from the Bible? Tell who said it, to whom, or under what circumstances.

1. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."
2. "Take up they bed and walk."
3. "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting."
4. "Behold the Lamb of God."
5. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."
6. "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."
7. "Woman, behold thy son."
8. "Who shall roll the stone away?"
9. "Suffer little children to come unto me."
10. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."
11. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground."
12. "The Lord is my shepherd."
13. "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand."
14. "Thou are the Christ, the son of the living God."
15. "Do this in remembrance of Me."

Answers to Newsletter Issue 37 will be published in Issue 38 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com Answers to Newsletter Issue 36: 1. A crown of thorns, 2. Clothes, 3. 30, 4. With a kiss, 5. Caiaphas, 6. Joseph, 7. Spear, 8. Thomas, 9. Simon of Cyrene, 10. 40 days.

Army RC Newsletter

Letters to the Editor



Dear Readers,

We are excited to introduce a new section in future issues of the newsletter: '***Letters to the Editor.***'

This is your space to share thoughts, reflections, questions, and experiences related to your faith journey and our shared spiritual community.

Do you have a testimony of how God has worked in your life recently? A response to something you have read in the newsletter, or perhaps a question or idea you would like us to explore together? We sincerely invite you to participate by writing to us.

Your voices matter. Together, we can grow deeper in faith, encourage one another, and foster meaningful conversations within our community. Let us make this a place where hearts are uplifted and God's love is shared.

If you feel you would like to submit an article for publication in the newsletter, then please send your articles and/or letters to: armyrcpaa21@gmail.com and we may include them in upcoming publications.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

As someone who is eager to deepen my understanding of Catholic teaching, I would appreciate some clarification on the concept of transubstantiation. I often hear the term used in reference to the Eucharist, but I would be grateful for a clear explanation of what it means and why it is significant in Catholic belief.

Thank you for your time and for the valuable work you do in sharing the faith.

Sincerely,

Mrs Laura Jones, Aldershot

Dear Laura,

Thank you for your thoughtful letter and for reaching out with such an important question. It is always encouraging to hear from readers who are seeking a deeper understanding of the faith.

Transubstantiation is indeed a central and profound teaching of the Catholic Church, and your desire to learn more about it is both commendable and deeply valued.

In the Catholic Church, transubstantiation is the belief that during the celebration of the Eucharist (also known as Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper), the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This transformation, while unseen to the senses, is believed to occur at the moment of consecration during Mass. The bread and wine still appear as bread and wine, but their substance has changed into the true body and blood of Christ. Catholics hold that this is not a symbolic act, but a real profound mystery of faith; Christ is truly, fully, and physically present under the appearances of bread and wine.

The term "transubstantiation" was developed and formally defined by theologians over time, but the belief in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist dates back to the earliest days of the church.

Whilst the Catholic Church and some other Christian traditions, upholds this doctrine, it is not universally accepted among all Christian denominations. However, the scriptural foundation for the belief can be found in passages such as John 6: 53-56, where Jesus says:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

Transubstantiation remains one of the most sacred and central mysteries of the Catholic faith.

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? The Bishopric of the Forces is offering 3 opportunities to go on a retreat in 2025. The retreats are open to all MOD personnel (Regular, Reserve and Civil Servant); immediate dependants will be considered dependent upon the availability of places. Applications from junior ranks are particularly encouraged.

For 2025, Douai Abbey in Berkshire, St. Beuno's Centre in North Wales, and Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire.



DOUAI ABBEY 10 - 13 JUN 25



ST. BEUNO'S CENTRE 13 - 16 OCT 25

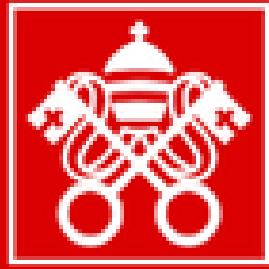


AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 10 - 13 Nov 25

The retreats are aimed at all levels of faith and knowledge, age groups, backgrounds, ranks and experiences. They will allow participants to challenge their preconceptions in a relaxed and non-judgmental environment. All venues offer a unique opportunity to take a fresh look at faith away from the pressures of everyday service life. The retreats aim to promote and foster spiritual and moral values from a faith perspective thus contributing to professional and personal development as well as serving to strengthen the moral component of the application of military force.

Further details can be found on the Defence Instructions and Notices: DIN 2025DIN01-011
Alternatively, please make contact to register your interest or to receive further information:

Wg Cdr (Retd) Jem Wynne, Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain. Tel: 07834609153 Email: Jeremy.Wynne109@mod.gov.uk



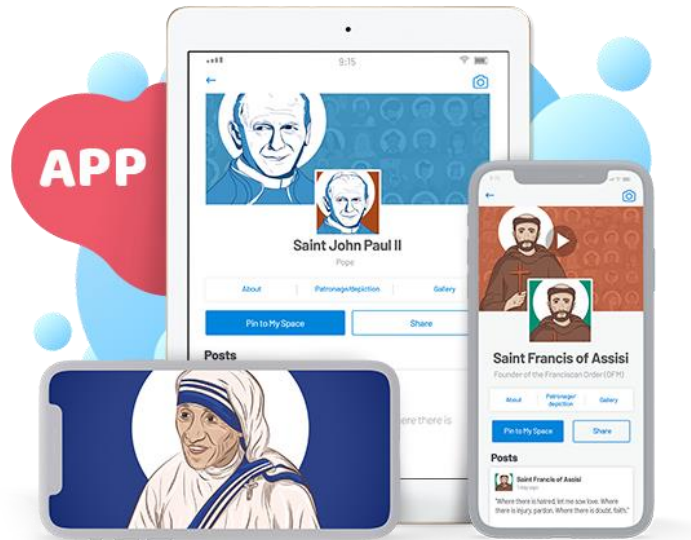
VATICAN NEWS

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 June

Pentecost (Solemnity) – 8th June

Mary Mother of the Church – 9th June

Our Lord Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest
– 12th June

The Most Holy Trinity
(Solemnity) – 15th June

The Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ
(Solemnity) – 22nd June

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist
(Solemnity) – 24th June

The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
(Solemnity) – 27th June

St. Peter & St. Paul, Apostles
(Solemnity) – 29th June

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