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*"The Lord has called us from different nations, but we must be united with one heart and one soul." Maria Elizabeth Hesselblad*



## *Army Roman Catholic Newsletter*



### *Welcome*

*From*

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



Welcome to Issue 41 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As we approach the joyful season of Christmas, we reflect on the hope, peace, and love that the birth of Christ brings to the world, especially within our military community. In this edition of our newsletter, we unite in faith and strength, celebrating the light of Christ as we prepare our hearts for His coming. Throughout the month of December, let us embrace the spirit of Advent, a time of waiting, praying, and preparing our souls for the birth of our Saviour. We will share prayers, reflections, and events happening within our Army Roman Catholic community, offering opportunities for spiritual growth, fellowship, and support as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. May this time of anticipation and reflection bring peace and joy to all our service members, their families, and all those who support our mission. Merry Christmas and God bless!

# *Advent: A Season of Hope and Preparation*

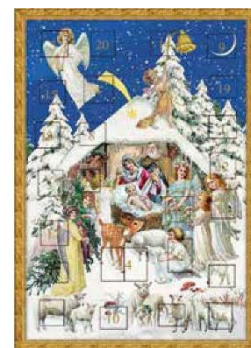


Around the world, Catholics and Christians alike mark the Advent season with meaningful traditions that prepare the heart for Christ's coming. Common customs include the lighting of Advent wreaths and the use of Advent calendars to count the days until Christmas. In different cultures, unique practices bring added richness to this season, Italian shepherds play joyful tunes on bagpipes, families in Germany open daily doors on Advent calendars, and the faithful in Ethiopia observe a special fast. No matter how it is celebrated, Advent invites all believers to pause, pray, and reflect as we await the birth of our Savior with renewed hope and joyful anticipation.

## **Common traditions:**

### **The Advent Calendar**

Originating in Germany, the Advent calendar has become a beloved tradition around the world. Each day of Advent, a small door is opened to reveal a surprise, often a treat or picture—but in its earliest form, these calendars contained Scripture verses to help families reflect on God's Word as they prepared their hearts for the coming of Christ.



### **The Advent Wreath**

The Advent wreath, made of evergreen branches symbolising eternal life, holds four candles, one for each Sunday of Advent, representing hope, peace, joy, and love. Each week, a new candle is lit as we draw closer to the celebration of Christ's birth. Many families and parishes also include a fifth candle, the Christ Candle, which is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate the light of Christ coming into the world.

### **Christingle**

Originating from the Moravian Church, the Christingle is a symbolic tradition that reminds us of Jesus as the Light of the World. It consists of an orange representing the world, a red ribbon symbolizing Christ's redeeming love, and a candle placed at the center to signify His light shining in the darkness.



## Reflection and Charity

During Advent, many Christians take time to reflect on their faith and the true meaning of Christmas. It is a season of spiritual renewal—an opportunity to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ through prayer, repentance, and acts of love. Many parishes and charities also offer ways to put faith into action during this holy season, such as fundraising, food drives, or sponsored fasts, reminding us to share Christ's light with those in need.



### Further Examples from around the world:



In Italy, Advent and Christmas are filled with joyful traditions that celebrate the coming of Christ. Shepherds, known as **zampognari**, sometimes visit towns playing bagpipes and singing carols, recalling the shepherds who first heard the good news of Jesus' birth. Beautiful nativity scenes, or **presepe**, are lovingly displayed in homes,

churches, and public squares, serving as a heartfelt reminder of the Holy Family and the true meaning of Christmas.



In China, Advent and Christmas are often marked with the glow of colorful paper lanterns, symbolizing the light of Christ shining in the world. These beautiful displays remind the faithful to welcome Jesus, the true Light, into their hearts during this holy season.

In Mexico, the joyful celebration of **Las Posadas** takes place from December 16 to 24. For nine nights, families and communities join in processions that re-enact Mary and Joseph's search for shelter in Bethlehem. Going from house to house, participants sing, pray, and reflect on the holy journey that led to the birth of Christ, filling homes and hearts with faith, hope, and hospitality.



Overall, while Advent's central focus is preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ, the ways it is celebrated around the world are beautifully diverse, shaped by local traditions, history, and the rhythms of each culture and climate.



# *King Charles attends ecumenical prayer service in Sistine Chapel*

## *23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025*

By Kielce Gussie

King Charles III and Queen Camilla join Pope Leo XIV in the Sistine Chapel for Midday Prayer as part of their official state visit to the Vatican – marking a historic moment in Anglican-Catholic relations. After a meeting in the Apostolic Palace earlier in the morning, Pope Leo XIV, King Charles III and Queen Camilla of Great Britain gathered together for an ecumenical prayer service in the Sistine Chapel. They were joined by the Most Reverend Stephen Cottrell, the 98th Archbishop of York and the Primate of England – the second-most senior bishop in the Church of England.

The Pope and Archbishop led a midday prayer comprising psalms and a Gospel reading. Michaelangelo's frescoed chapel was filled with a number of ecumenical guests, including the Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, and the Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Leo Cushley, representing the Scottish episcopate.

This visit marked a historic moment in Anglican-Catholic relations—one that has not occurred in 500 years. Two themes marked the journey: Christian unity and care for the environment. Originally scheduled for April, the visit was cancelled due to Pope Francis' ill health. One of its goals was to highlight the shared commitment of King Charles and the Argentine Pope to the care of Creation — ten years after the publication of the encyclical *Laudato si'*.



Two themes marked the visit: Christian unity and care for the environment. (@Vatican Media)

Moreover, the ecumenical prayer service, held in Latin and English, built upon the good relations between the Vatican and the United Kingdom. It also fulfilled a wish of King Charles, who, as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, has long been committed to interfaith engagement.

From the opening hymn of the prayer service, the theme of Christian unity and ecumenism was evident. The original text was written by St. Ambrose of Milan, Doctor of the Church. It was translated by St. John Henry Newman, who was an Anglican for half of his life before converting to Catholicism. King Charles had attended the canonization ceremony of the English theologian in 2019. St. John Henry Newman is set to be declared a Doctor of the Church on 1 November by Pope Leo.



The Sistine Chapel hosted the ecumenical prayer service presided over by Pope Leo (@Vatican Media)

Continuing this atmosphere of communion, the chapel was filled with the voices of the Lay Clerks of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle and the Children of the Chapel Royal of St. James' Palace - both invited by King Charles and Queen Camilla - together with the Sistine Chapel Choir. The three groups chanted and sung the hymn and psalms of midday prayer.

As the organ signalled the end of the prayer service, Pope Leo exited the Sistine Chapel side-by-side with King Charles.



# *King Charles receives Royal Confrater title as sign of 'hope' with Anglican Communion*

By Lorena Leonardi and Edoardo Giribaldi



The British monarch is accorded the title "Royal Confrater" at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, taking a seat on a stall bearing the Gospel inscription, "That they may be one". This wish is echoed by Cardinal Harvey, who, together with Abbot Ogliari, accompanies the Royals through the Holy Door before the ecumenical celebration. *Ut unum sint* - "That they may they one." A horizon of "hope" for the future characterised the atmosphere in the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, during the ceremony conferring the title of *Royal Confrater* on King Charles III of England took place at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, during his state visit to the Vatican alongside Queen Camilla. The ecumenical celebration was presided over by Abbot Donato Ogliari, in the presence of Cardinal Archpriest of the Papal Basilica James Michael Harvey; the Archbishop of York and Primate of England, Stephen Cottrell; and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Rosie Frew.

The Royals entered the basilica through the Holy Door, then were accompanied down the aisle by Cardinal Harvey, Abbot Ogliari, Archbishop Cottrell, and Moderator Frew while the congregation sang *Hosanna to the Son of David* in the version of Orlando Gibbons, Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1605 to 1625. The music was performed by the *Schola* of the Abbey of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, the lay clerks of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, and the children of St. James's Royal Chapel in London; at the organ was Christian Almada, Titular Organist of the Papal Basilica. After a brief stop in front of the altar, Cardinal Harvey and Abbot Ogliari led the monarchs in a moment of prayer at the tomb of the Apostle Paul. Here, Archbishop Cottrell prayed that the congregation may bear witness to the Gospel "in the darkness of our time." King Charles and Queen

Camilla then took their seats as the choir sang *Sing Joyfully* by William Byrd, also a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

After the introductory rites, Cardinal Harvey took the floor, recalling the strong historical ties that unite the Papal Basilica with the kingdom of England. This dialogue reached a decisive stage in the 1966 meeting between Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey, which led to official dialogue between the two communions "for the first time since the Reformation." On that occasion, the Pontiff memorably placed his episcopal ring on the archbishop's finger.

The honorary title of *Royal Confrater* of the basilica and abbey—offered with the approval of Pope Leo XIV—is therefore a sign of "hope", explained the cardinal, and a gesture of welcome not only to a sovereign but to a "brother."

King Charles sat on a throne created for the occasion, bearing the royal coat of arms and the Latin inscription from the Gospel of John, *Ut unum sint* - "That they may be one." The throne will remain in the apse of the Basilica and will be used in the future by the king himself and his heirs and successors.

After Abbot Ogliari read the formal declaration of confraternity — invoking the "common ecumenical journey" and "fraternal task" — the Benedictine and the Cardinal exchanged the sign of peace with King Charles. This was followed by the singing of *Excelsam Pauli gloriam* by St. Peter Damian.

Moderator Rosie Frew proclaimed the First Reading from the Letter to the Ephesians; after which the *Schola* intoned the chant *Ecce quam bonum*, which quotes Psalm 133 and expresses the main theme of the service: "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is brethren, to dwell together in unity!"

Archbishop Cottrell then read a passage from the Gospel of John (chapter 17), containing the phrase inscribed on the English sovereign's stall. The hymn *In God's word will I rejoice*, composed by Henry Purcell, another Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, was then sung. The Prayer of the Faithful, read by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, archbishop of Westminster, included prayers for the pastors of the Church of God "throughout the world," especially Pope Leo XIV and "the rulers of nations," particularly King Charles. In keeping with the theme of the royal visit, the Cardinal also prayed for Creation, so that its "cry" may be heard and protected for the benefit of future generations.

Before the final prayer, the motet *Exultate Deo*, by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, was performed, in honour of the 500th anniversary of the composer's birth this year. The celebration concluded with the hymn *Praise to the Holiest in the Height*, the text of which is taken from Saint John Henry Newman's poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*. The British cardinal will be proclaimed a Doctor of the Church on November 1. At the end of the service, Almada played the first movement of Edward Elgar's *Organ Sonata in G major*. Elgar, a Catholic, served as Master of the King's Music from 1924 to 1934. Afterward, the Royals paid a brief private visit to the monumental library of the abbey attached to the basilica.

# *Fraternity and hope strengthen relations between Catholics and Anglicans*

By Archbishop Flavio Pace & Bishop Anthony Ball\*



Perspectives on the visit of the British Royal Family to the Vatican by Archbishop Pace, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, and Bishop Ball, director of the Anglican Centre in Rome. The warmth and gestures that accompanied it "nurture our confidence in the path of dialogue and engagement with one another to which our churches remain wholeheartedly committed. We continue to hope, as Pope Leo has expressed it, for 'the re-establishment of full and visible communion.'"

Four years after her death in 1603, the body of Queen Elizabeth I was moved and re-interred in the same grave as her half-sister, Queen Mary I (Tudor), in London's Westminster Abbey. United by blood, the two were divided by religious affiliation. A series of Acts of Parliament between 1529 and 1536 had transferred all spiritual and canonical authority over the '*ecclesia anglicana*' from the papacy to the crown. The 1534 Act of Supremacy declared their father, King Henry VIII, Supreme Head of the Church. This Supremacy was briefly repealed during the reign of the Catholic Mary but was re-established during the reign of the Protestant Elizabeth.

That the Catholic Queen Mary, whose short reign was marked by such vigorous attempts to reverse the English Supremacy that she became known as 'Bloody Mary', and the Protestant Elizabeth, whose long reign saw that Supremacy consolidated, are buried together is remarkable. This powerful sign of longing for the restoration of unity and of hope in the healing power of the paschal mystery of the



Lord Jesus is reflected in the extraordinary inscription on their joint tomb: "*Regno consortes et urna hic obdormimus Elizabeth et Maria sorores in spe resurrectionis*" – "Consorts in realm and tomb, here we sleep, Elizabeth and Mary, sisters in hope of resurrection".

Sadly, during the centuries that followed, relations between Catholics and Protestants in England and, indeed, between England and Rome were not marked by anything like this sense of fraternal affection. Much blood was shed and there were many martyrs on both sides. Long after the violence ended, they remained strangers to one another. When a small group of Roman Catholic and Anglican scholars began exploring the possibility of corporate reunion in 1921, in what were known as the Malines Conversations, the Catholic bishops of England were not at all enthusiastic. On the global level the Catholic Church remained aloof from the ecumenical movement for much of the first half of the twentieth century. It was only in 1960 that the first visit of an Archbishop of Canterbury to Rome in modern times took place, when Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher visited Pope John XXIII. Such was the sensitivity around their meeting that no photography was allowed.

Royal visits to Rome had begun somewhat earlier. Against government advice, King Edward VII visited Pope Leo XIII in 1903 – in a strictly private capacity. Although a British legation to the Holy See was established in 1914, it was not until 1982 that full diplomatic relations were established. King George V and Queen Mary visited Pope Pius XI in 1923, but the next British royal visit to the Vatican did not take place until 1961, when Queen Elizabeth II visited Pope John XXIII. Hers was the first official visit to the Holy See by a British Monarch since the Reformation. She later visited Popes John Paul II and Francis and also received Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI during their visits to the United Kingdom.

This gradual warming of relationships between the United Kingdom and the Holy See took place in parallel with growing closeness between the Catholic Church and the Church of England. Speaking of the communions that were separated from Rome as a result of the Reformation, the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism taught that "among those in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place". When Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI met in 1966, their *Common Declaration* spoke of "a new stage in the development of fraternal relations, based upon Christian charity, and of sincere efforts to remove the causes of conflict and to re-establish unity". The Anglican Centre in Rome was inaugurated shortly afterwards. The decision of the Pope and the Archbishop to establish a theological dialogue led to the founding of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). ARCIC has published fourteen separate documents over the last fifty years. During the canonisation of forty English and Welsh martyrs of the Reformation era in 1970, Pope Paul spoke of looking forward to the day when

the Roman Catholic Church "is able to embrace her ever beloved Sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ".

The programmes for previous royal visits to the Holy See did not include religious services. That King Charles III's visit today includes not only prayer in the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul outside the Walls, but also prayer in the Sistine Chapel, alongside the Pope himself makes this a truly historic occasion. It truly also is historic that a bond between the English Crown and Saint Paul's that was broken when our churches separated, was re-established today, in a way that is meaningful for our time, and which respects the King's coronation oaths. With the permission of the Pope and the encouragement of the Archpriest, the brothers of the Benedictine Community at the Basilica of Saint Paul have embraced King Charles and named him a royal *confrater* of the Basilica. The newly created seat in the Basilica in which the King is installed today will stand as a visible reminder of this gesture of loving hospitality, the significance of which should not be underestimated. It is a recognition, despite many outstanding theological differences, of the depth of the communion between our two traditions. It is significant that the gift of confraternity was offered. It is significant that His Majesty wished to accept it. It is significant too that leaders of the national churches of both England and Scotland are present and participating in the service at Saint Paul's.

Sadly, fulfilment of the hope of which the tomb of Queens Mary and Elizabeth speaks and the embrace in one authentic communion for which Pope Paul VI prayed remain at a distance. Indeed, developments over the years have caused some to wonder if the goal is receding rather than getting closer. Archbishop Justin Welby and Pope Francis addressed this directly in a *Common Declaration* in 2016: "While, like our predecessors, we ourselves do not yet see solutions to the obstacles before us, we are undeterred. In our trust and joy in the Holy Spirit we are confident that dialogue and engagement with one another will deepen our understanding and help us to discern the mind of Christ for his Church." The warmth of the welcome to King Charles at the Vatican today and the gestures accompanying it renew that trust and joy and nurture our confidence in the path of dialogue and engagement with one another to which our churches remain wholeheartedly committed. We continue to hope, as Pope Leo has expressed it, for "the re-establishment of full and visible communion".

*\*Archbishop Flavio Pace is Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. Bishop Anthony Ball is Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See.*

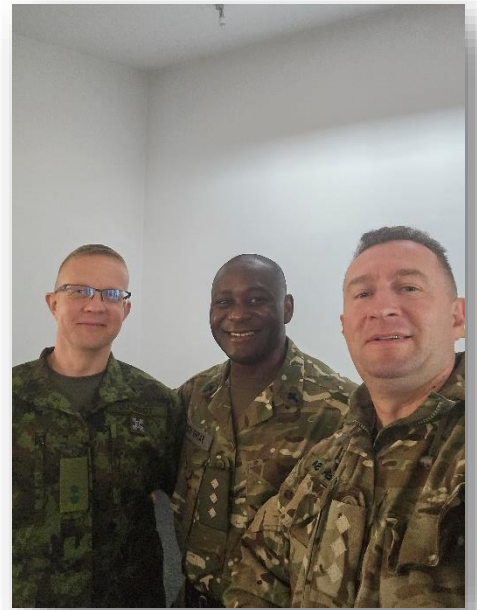
Reference: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2025-10/fraternity-and-hope-relations-between-catholics-and-anglicans.html>

# *The best pastoral service on deployment – or how does a Catholic chaplain feel in Estonia?*

Written by Fr. Volodymyr Sampara

The grand alignments of planets occur only once in 100-200 years. So, my deployment to Estonia was planned as the Chaplain of The Royal Tank Regiment. It turned out that Fr. Terkura Igbe was there finishing his first deployment as a newly commissioned chaplain. What a coincidence, foreseen by the Providence of God to replace a Catholic priest by another Catholic brother in service!

Fr. Terkura started serving French Catholic soldiers for Holy Mass every Sunday, so I was blessed to carry on this beautiful experience of saying Mass in the French language. My French is not as good as Fr. Terkura but, the soldiers say that it is "understandable". We are happy to have another Belgian priest here, Fr. Alain who is from the Dominican convent, and he comes regularly to say Mass too.



A multi-Christian worship on Sunday is enriched by the beautiful Fijian military community, singing and glorifying God. They celebrated the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fiji's Independence. I had the opportunity to read the Gospel and bless the event. Our Commanding Officer, Lt-Col Mark Lusson together with the Regimental 2IC, RSM and many others were present to give their respect and support to all the Fijians who serve with us.



You can feel the thirst for God between Soldiers. Some Estonian soldiers come to the church to pray with us. Their chaplain Rev. Tauno also visits the camp to see them. One of them is an Orthodox believer, but he expresses his respect to the Ukrainian Catholic priest and his friends asked for a blessing whilst visiting him in the camp. There are also American soldiers who come to pray with us. Fortunately, they have their own chaplain visiting them from time to time, but I am there for everyone 24/7.



As a part of cultural contacts with the local Estonian Church and Community, Fr. Terkura and I managed to go into Tallin and visited the local Estonian Catholic Bishop Phillip. I became acquainted with the Ukrainian Catholic priest of Tallinn and Rakvere, Fr. Roman Kikh, who invited me to celebrate a Holy Mass in Rakvere with the local Ukrainian community.

God acts every day, bringing his children to open the truth and follow the way of salvation. The chaplain is here for everyone in spite or belief of non-belief, to bring hope, confidence and motivation in service and personal life. The chaplain comes and stays with the troops as much as possible in the field hangars, workshops, barracks, bringing the word of support and some good quality "moral".

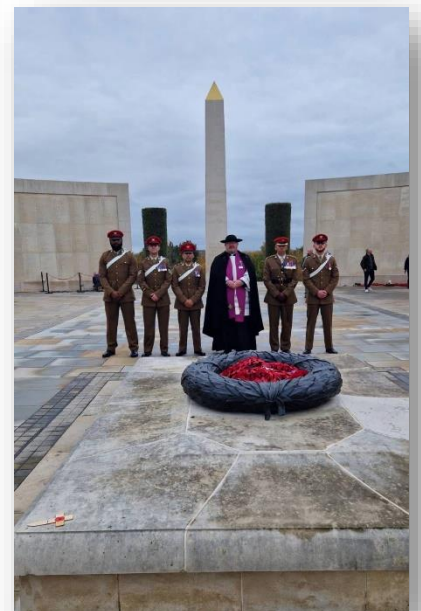
Sending many Blessings to everyone who reads this article and please say a prayer for us!



# Remembrance



Fr. Kevin Dow, Chaplain to The Royal Lancers Regiment, had the privilege of celebrating the annual service of remembrance for the Lancers Old Comrade Association. Both serving and veterans attended the service at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.





# *The Art of Remembrance* *(from The Last Post to The Monuments Men)*

Provided to us by Musn Dean Welsh, Media Researcher, Band of SCOTS, Edinburgh

Musn Dean Welsh had met Fr. Patrick Van der Vorst earlier in the year regarding the making of a video focussing on the Last Post and the artwork of the headstones and cemeteries. The result can be viewed by clicking on the link: <https://youtu.be/XecOkMODYZY?si=SFqZ2rSr9jbVBPLr>



The following paragraph reflects on the video content:

Fr. Patrick van der Vorst, founder of [@christianart](#) visits Brookwood War Cemetery in Surrey, UK, one of Europe's largest burial grounds, to reflect on how art, music, and faith help us remember the fallen. Among the quiet ranks of headstones, he traces the origins of Remembrance: from the founding of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to the birth of the Red Poppy as a symbol of sacrifice and hope. The poppy's delicate stem and scattered seeds become an image of both human fragility and renewal, life rising again from loss. Fr. Patrick explores how war scarred not only lives but culture itself, destroying churches, monuments, and masterpieces, and how artists, curators, and soldiers, the Monuments Men, risked everything to preserve beauty amidst chaos. In John Singer Sargent's haunting painting *Gassed*, he finds not triumph but compassion, a modern Via Dolorosa that reveals humanity's endurance and the faint light of hope even in devastation. The film concludes with one of the most moving artworks of all: not painted, but played, *The Last Post*. A single bugle call that speaks through silence, its pauses carrying the weight of memory, prayer, and gratitude. Standing among the fallen, Fr. Patrick reminds us that remembrance is more than history, it is a call to guard peace, cherish beauty, and let silence itself become our act of devotion.



# *Cambrai Tank Battle Commemoration Parade*



Fr. Vlodymyr Sampara, is currently deployed in Estonia as Chaplain of The Royal Tank Regiment. He recently led a commemoration parade for the Battle of Cambrai that took place in 1917 during the First World War. This year the 20th of November marks the 108<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Cambrai, an occasion that is commemorated by the Royal Tank Regiment annually.



If you are interested in learning more about the Royal Tank Regiment and the Battle of Cambrai, please go to: <https://tankmuseum.org/>

# *St Patrick's Tidworth*



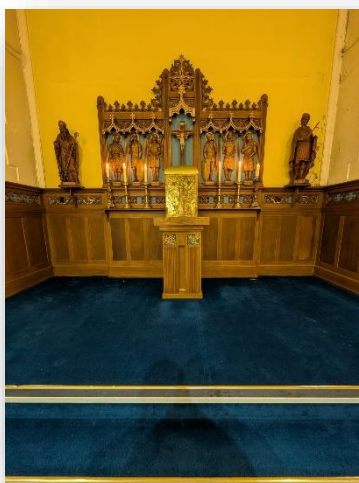
The pictures above show the Roman Catholic Church of St. Patrick & St. George at Tidworth in Wiltshire. It was designed by a local architect, GLW Blount and was partially funded by fines levied against recruits who, having received suitable warning, compounded misdemeanors during training!

Additionally, each soldier of The Munsters, The Royal Munster Fusiliers, gave a penny a week, NCOs gave 6 pence. Soldiers and their families helped with the preparation of the site (which was a sandpit) and the church was completed in 1912, becoming one of the earliest purpose-built RC garrison churches in the country.

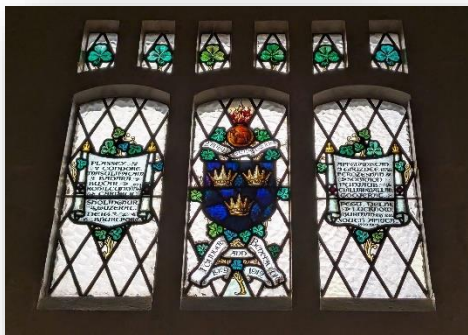
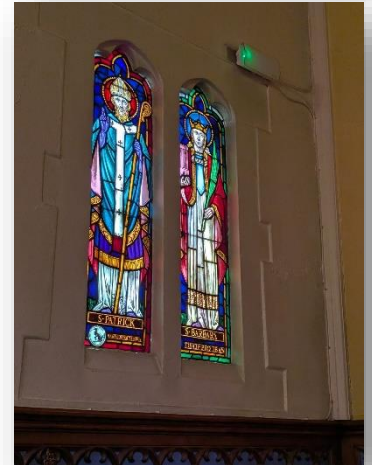
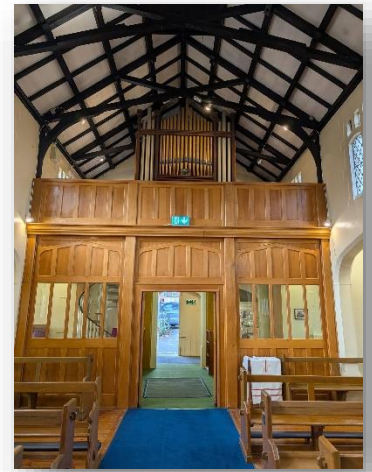
Faced in flint throughout with Bath stone dressings, it is constructed using a steel frame, an early example of such a structural system being used for a church.

St. Patrick's, Tidworth, along with the Cathedral Church of St. Michael & St. George in Aldershot and St. Joan of Arc in Catterick Garrison are the last three Catholic Garrison Churches left in the Army.

Please enjoy some photographs taken of the interior of St. Patrick's church.







Information obtained from St. Joan of Arc, Garrison Memorial Church, Catterick Facebook page and Church crawling - church art, architecture and history - Malcolm Woods.



# *Reflection on St. John of Capistrano*

## *Patron Saint of Military Chaplains*



Feast day: 23<sup>rd</sup> October

We may have turned the calendar page since St. John of Capistrano's feast day on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, but it's never too late to reflect on his remarkable witness to faith and service. Many may not know much about this 15th-century Franciscan friar, yet his life offers a powerful example for those who serve both God and country. Known as the "Soldier Saint," John of Capistrano was not only a preacher and reformer but also a chaplain who inspired Christian soldiers in defence of their communities during a time of great peril. His courage, faith, and leadership under pressure continue to make him a fitting patron for military chaplains and all who minister to those in uniform. In remembering St. John of Capistrano, we are reminded that faith and duty, prayer and action, can stand firmly side by side in the service of peace and the protection of others.

### **Saint John of Capistrano's Story:**

It has been said the Christian saints are the world's greatest optimists. Not blind to the existence and consequences of evil, they base their confidence on the power of Christ's redemption. The power of conversion through Christ extends not only to sinful people but also to calamitous events.

Imagine being born in the 14th century. One-third of the population and nearly 40 percent of the clergy were wiped out by the bubonic plague. The Western Schism split the Church with two or three claimants to the Holy See at one time. England and France were at war. The city-states of Italy were constantly in conflict. No wonder that gloom dominated the spirit of the culture and the times.

John of Capistrano was born in 1386. His education was thorough. His talents and success were great. When he was 26, he was made governor of Perugia. Imprisoned after a battle against the Malatestas, he resolved to change his way of life completely. At the age of 30 he entered the Franciscan novitiate and was ordained a priest four years later.

John of Capistrano's preaching attracted great throngs at a time of religious apathy and confusion. He and 12 Franciscan brethren were received in the countries of central Europe as angels of God. They were instrumental in reviving a dying faith and devotion.

The Franciscan Order itself was in turmoil over the interpretation and observance of the Rule of St. Francis. Through John's tireless efforts and his expertise in law, the heretical Fraticelli were suppressed, and the "Spirituals" were freed from interference in their stricter observance.

John of Capistrano helped bring about a brief reunion with the Greek and Armenian Churches.

When the Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, John was commissioned to preach a crusade for the defense of Europe. Gaining little response in Bavaria and Austria, he decided to concentrate his efforts in Hungary. He led the army to Belgrade. Under the great General John Hunyadi, they gained an overwhelming victory, and the siege of Belgrade was lifted. Worn out by his superhuman efforts, Capistrano was easy prey to an infection after the battle. He died on October 23, 1456.

Reference: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-of-capistrano/>

### *Quote:*

*"Those who are called to the table of the Lord must glow with the brightness that comes from the good example of a praiseworthy and blameless life. They must completely remove from their lives the filth and uncleanness of vice. Their upright lives must make them like the salt of the earth for themselves and for the rest of mankind. The brightness of their wisdom must make them like the light of the world that brings light to others. They must learn from their eminent teacher, Jesus Christ, what he declared not only to his apostles and disciples, but also to all the priests and clerics who were to succeed them, when he said, "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world." ...By the brightness of their holiness they must bring light and serenity to all who gaze upon them. They have been placed here to care for others. Their own lives should be an example to others, showing how they must live in the house of the Lord."*

*~From the treatise "Mirror of the Clergy," by Saint John of Capistrano*

Reference: <https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/october-23-st-john-of-capistrano/>



# *Saint Martin*

## *An Enduring Saint...*

By Michele McAloon JCL (Juris Canonici Licentiatius)



Born on the plains of Pannonia, in present day Hungary, raised in Italy, and eventually becoming known as the apostle of the Gaul's in modern day France, the legacy of Saint Martin of Tours ( lived 316 AD -397 AD) spans the European continent. The namesake of the man who only ever really wanted to be a holy hermit adorns many towns, schools, churches and even bottles of wine from the Czech Republic to Croatia to France.

November 11th, the Feast day of Saint Martin, is an auspicious date in the history of Europe and the world. In 1918, the war to end all wars, was proclaimed finished on this date in Compiegne, France. A mere four hours away from Tours, the home diocese of St Martin. The soldier saint would have smiled at the hubris. He knew from his own experience that the cycle of human quarrels and violence never ends, Only the names change, barbarism, Arianism, Nazism, or Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Fallen mans perpetual repetitive interaction with sin is endless.

The young Martin was born to a high ranking and successful Roman legionnaire, in a time when Christianity was young. Surrounded by Christian servants, throughout his youth, he noticed the markedly different behavior of those who followed Christ than those who worshiped Roman deities. As early as the age of ten, he requested baptism, but was denied because his father, who still remained adamantly loyal to the pagan Gods of Rome, failed to give permission.

As a young man he attended what was basically Roman military academy to become a calvary officer in Milan, Italy. When Roman Legionnaire Martin, was assigned to near present day Amiens, France, he was baptized and given minor orders. It was here he would have an experience that would change his life forever.

One day when returning from maneuvers, Saint Martin saw an impoverished and thinly clad beggar lying before the city gate. He offered half of his Roman cloak to the wretched soul. Later he dreamed that the man to whom he had given the cloak was Christ himself.

After two years Martin resigned from the Army and returned home to try to convert his father. He failed, but did have the happiness of seeing his mother baptized before her death. Returning to Gaul, Saint Martin became a disciple of Saint Hilary of Poitiers, a renowned bishop of the time. Despite Saint Martin's desire to live a simple holy life as a monk, his fame grew for his piety and his ability to perform miracles.

Against his will, Saint Martin was made a bishop. Legend tells the story that he did not want to become a bishop and hid in a goose pen to avoid meeting the emissaries who were bringing the news of his elevation. To this day, families all over Europe gather together to have roast goose in a feast celebration -oddly reminiscent of our Thanksgiving- on the eleventh of November commemorating Saint Martin.

As a bishop he lived an impoverished life, tirelessly trying to convert the Germanic tribes that had settled in northern France. Saint Martin's hagiography is often associated with a tree. Pagan woodsmen were cutting a pine tree and challenged Bishop Martin to stand under the tree as it was being felled. If he remained unharmed they promised they would convert to Christianity. The woodsmen were in the Church the next day being baptized by Saint Martin himself.

St Martin's reputation was so great that he became a friend and advisor to many who would become pillars and saints of the Church, Saint Ambrose, St Augustine and St Jerome.

He left this life for eternity on November 8, 397. During the Middle Ages, his tomb would become a site of pilgrimage and miracles, often for those traveling the Way of St James to Compostela, Spain.

In November, in northern Europe, daylight is in short supply. Night falls early and fast. Beginning with All Saints Day, the steel grey dome of the winter sky lowers and remains seemingly impenetrable to light for too many months. Mozart's Requiem is featured in concert halls as an ode to a receding memory of a once agricultural based society. Who once understood that the harvest was over and the world was falling asleep until the Resurrection of the Spring. Oddly, it is also in the midst of this darkness of an increasingly post Christian Europe that Saint Martin's feast day endures.

In Germany, Saint Martin's Day is also known as the Lantern festival or Laternfest. School age children make homemade lanterns to carry during an evening procession through their communities. The short hikes end with a campfire, traditional campfire songs with a lantern theme, and then a family dinner at home of roast goose, red cabbage and potatoes.

Saint Martin is the patron saint of the French winemakers. According to legend, Saint Martin's donkey lunched on some grape vines while his master was performing his episcopal duties. The next year, the vintners noticed the quality of the vines improved. Henceforth, pruning of France's most hallowed fruit begins on November 11 with much fanfare and of course a few sips of wine. In still very Catholic Croatia, and even in the very atheistic Czech Republic has tradition remains of blessing new wine on Saint Martin's day.

The history of this venerable saint comes through another saint; Sulpicius Severus (AD 363-425) a near contemporary of St Martin. Much like Saint Martin, he was born of affluent parents, but decided to deny himself a life of comfort by serving Christ and the Church. Saint Sulpicius was one of the earliest historians to write a historical Christian narrative. He is known for his chronicles of sacred history, in addition to his biography of Saint Martin of Tours.



Europe identifying as Christendom is gone. The infamous Martin Luther baptized on Saint Martin's Day, November 11, 1483 would tear apart not only the beloved Church of his patron saint, but also the very fabric of Britain and Europe's true source of unity; the Eucharist. Yet, clinging to the centuries old celebrations of Saint Martin, there is something stubbornly persistent in the collective memory of the European world. A reminder that the true faith and the faith of a holy man cannot be forgotten. Saint Martin of Tours, pray for us.



Michele McAloon is a retired US Army Officer, a canon lawyer and host of the podcast Cross Word - a non-fiction book podcast (<https://bookclues.com/>).

She is also a parishioner in the faith community in Germany served by Fr. Pip Smith who is currently on secondment with the US Army in Germany.

# 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](mailto:Kevin.Dow101@mod.gov.uk)

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

[www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/roles/chaplain](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/roles/chaplain)

[www.jobs.army.mod.uk/roles/royal-army-chaplains-department/chaplain/](http://www.jobs.army.mod.uk/roles/royal-army-chaplains-department/chaplain/)

[www.recruitment.raf.mod.uk/roles/roles-finder/chaplaincy/chaplain](http://www.recruitment.raf.mod.uk/roles/roles-finder/chaplaincy/chaplain)

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

## ANSWERING THE CALL: BECOME A CATHOLIC MILITARY CHAPLAIN



*Roman Catholic  
Bishopric  
Of The Forces*



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

# What is Spiritual Direction?



Are you facing a challenge or a big decision?

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

Spiritual direction can help you during these times.

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

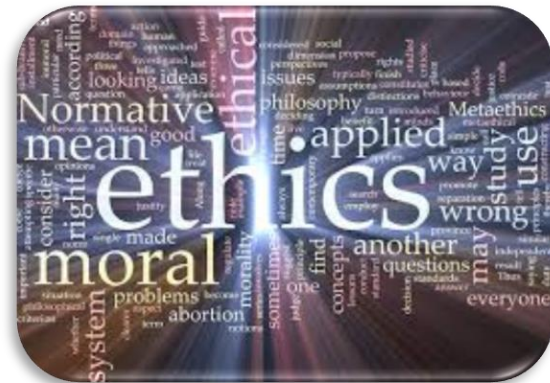
The aim is to have a closer relationship with God through prayer and how we live each day.

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

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

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

Everything you say is private and safe.



Please contact Karen - [ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com](mailto:ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com) for more details if this is something you would like to explore.





## ***Advent Quiz***

1. On which day of the week does Advent always begin?
2. The liturgical year begins with Advent, true or false?
3. What is the last day in Advent?
4. Which two colours are most often used in liturgical churches to represent Advent?
5. In most western liturgical churches, Christians fast during Advent, refraining from meat for the forty days before Christmas. True or false?
6. A common scripture reading during the Advent season is, "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." In which book of the Bible is this verse found?
7. What does the word Advent (from the Latin adventus) mean?
8. Like the 40 days of Lent, Advent is a fixed number of days before Christmas. True or false?
9. According to tradition, approximately how far did Mary travel to visit Elizabeth?
10. Why are the Advent candles arranged in the shape of a circle?
11. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word "Emmanuel"?
12. What is a Jesse Tree?

# *66<sup>th</sup> International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2026*



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

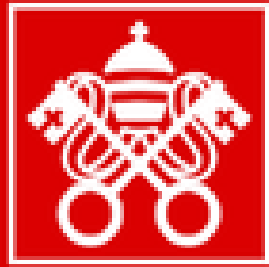
## *Bishopric of The Forces Retreats*



Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary?

Our upcoming retreats for 2026 promise to provide a restorative space for reflection, renewal, and spiritual growth. While dates are yet to be confirmed, they are expected to be announced in the new year. These retreats are open to all MOD personnel, Regular, Reserve, and Civil Servant, with immediate dependants considered subject to availability. Applications from junior ranks are particularly encouraged. Designed for individuals of all faiths, backgrounds, and experiences, the retreats offer a unique opportunity to explore and challenge personal perspectives in a relaxed and non-judgmental environment. Set in peaceful venues away from the pressures of everyday service life, the retreats aim to nurture spiritual and moral values, contributing to both personal and professional development and reinforcing the moral component of military service.





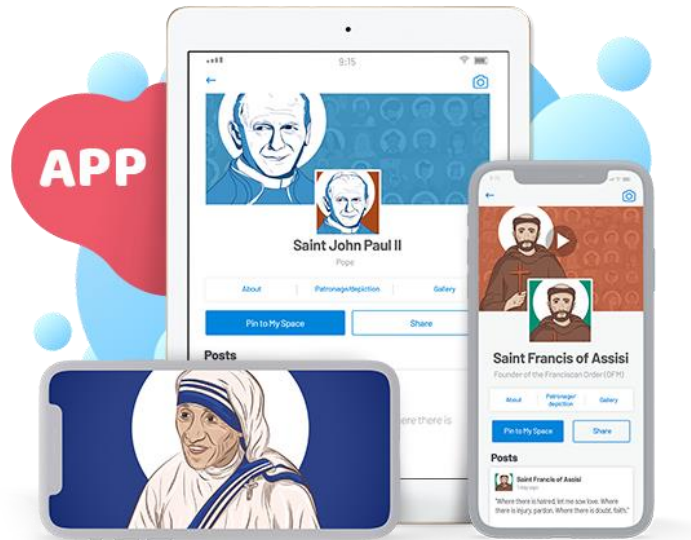
# VATICAN NEWS

*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 Nov & Dec

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe  
(Solemnity) – 23<sup>rd</sup> November

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent – 30<sup>th</sup> November

St Francis Xavier, Priest  
(Memorial) – 3<sup>rd</sup> December

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent – 7<sup>th</sup> December

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary  
(Solemnity) – 8<sup>th</sup> December

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent – 14<sup>th</sup> December

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – 21<sup>st</sup> December

The Nativity of the Lord  
(Solemnity) – 25<sup>th</sup> December

St Stephen, the first Martyr  
(Feast) – 26<sup>th</sup> December

St John, Apostle (Feast) – 27<sup>th</sup> December

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
(Feast) – 28<sup>th</sup> December

## **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](mailto:ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com)