

*In This Issue >>>*

Welcome

News & Events

Quiz

Notices

Key Dates

Issue  
44



"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." **John 3:16**



**ARMY**

## *Army Roman Catholic Newsletter*



### *Welcome*

*From*

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



Welcome to Issue 44 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

After the prayer, sacrifice and steadfast discipline of Lent, we now rejoice in the radiant triumph of Easter. In this Holy season, we celebrate Christ's victory over death and the promise of new life; a message that speaks powerfully to all who serve with courage and commitment. As members of our British Army Roman Catholic family, may the risen Lord renew our strength, deepen our faith, and fill our hearts with hope. Alleluia, He is risen!



# *Eastertide: Hope that Marches with us*



Every year the celebration of Easter arrives with familiar signs: the empty tomb, the joyful proclamation of "Alleluia," and the promise that life has overcome death. However, this year many of us may find ourselves approaching Easter with heavy hearts as we look at the suffering and uncertainty unfolding in different parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East. For those serving in the British Army and for our families at home, such events can feel especially close to our lives and our prayers. Nonetheless maybe this is exactly why the season of Easter speaks so powerfully to us.

Easter is not simply a moment of joy after Lent; it is the beginning of a journey. After the Resurrection, the disciples of Jesus Christ did not immediately understand what had happened or what it meant for the world. They lived in uncertainty, fear, and even confusion. Yet slowly they began to realise that the Resurrection was not only a victory over death, but a call to live differently.

In many ways, that probably mirrors our own journey of faith.

For those in military life, uncertainty is not unfamiliar. We understand that peace is fragile, that stability must be protected, and that the world can change quickly. The message of Easter does not ignore these realities; rather, it speaks directly into them. The Resurrection proclaims that darkness and conflict do not have the final word.

Throughout the Easter season, the Church invites us to reflect on the encounters between the risen Christ and his followers. Repeatedly, the disciples meet him not in moments of triumph, but in the ordinary and sometimes anxious circumstances of their lives: walking along a road, fishing by the shore, gathering behind locked doors.

It is there that they hear the words that still echo for us today: "Peace be with you."

Peace in the Christian sense is not simply the absence of conflict. It is the deep assurance that God walks with us even in the most troubled circumstances. For soldiers, chaplains, and families alike, this assurance can become a quiet source of strength. Our faith reminds us that we are never alone in the challenges we face.

This Easter can therefore become more than a liturgical season. It can be an opportunity to renew the habits that sustain our faith: prayer, compassion, and solidarity with those who suffer.

In practical ways, we might consider:

- Praying intentionally for peace, particularly for those caught in conflict and for those working to protect life and restore stability.
- Supporting one another within our units and communities, recognising that faith often grows through shared encouragement.
- Reflecting on our vocation to serve, seeing military service not only as duty but also as a commitment to the protection of human dignity.

The Resurrection reminds us that hope is not naïve optimism. It is a conviction rooted in the belief that *God is still at work in the world, even when the path ahead seems uncertain.*

As we journey through Eastertide this year, we might ask ourselves a simple question: *Where is the risen Christ meeting us today?*

Perhaps it is in a quiet moment of prayer before the day begins. Perhaps it is in the camaraderie of those we serve beside. Perhaps it is in the determination to remain faithful to our values even when the world seems unsettled. Whatever our circumstances, the message of Easter remains constant: *hope is alive, and it walks with us.*

For those of us living and serving within the Army community, that hope is not something distant or theoretical. It is something we carry into our daily lives, our responsibilities, and our relationships.

And so, the words of Easter continue to guide us: *Alleluia. Christ is risen. Hope marches on.*



*"May the Risen Lord, who defeated sin and death, support us all especially the weakest and those most in need. May the Risen Christ guide you and all humanity on the paths of justice, love and peace!"*

Pope Francis

# *St. Patrick's Day 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026*

## *Irish Guards - Aldershot*

The Irish Guards held their annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at Mons Barracks, Aldershot. The Princess of Wales, Catherine, attended in her role as Colonel of the Regiment to present shamrocks to officers and guardsmen, a tradition dating back to 1901.

The Princess also presented a shamrock to the Irish Wolfhound mascot, Turlough Mor (known as Seamus).

The event included a march-past, a royal salute, and the awarding of medals to members of the regiment. Fr. David Burke, Chaplain to the Irish Guards, gave the blessing.



# *Chrism Mass*

## *St. Michael and St. George's, Aldershot*

### *Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026*



The Chrism Mass is one of the principal expressions of the fullness of the Bishop's priesthood and signifies the close unity of the priests with him. During the Mass, which he can concelebrates with as many priests from the diocese as can possibly be present, the Bishop consecrates the Chrism and blesses the other oils.

The Christian liturgy has assimilated this Old Testament usage of anointing kings, priests and prophets with consecratory oils because the name Christ, whom they prefigured, means "the anointed one of the Lord".

Chrism is a sign: by baptism Christians are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with, and rise with, him; they are sharers in his royal and prophetic priesthood. By confirmation Christians receive this spiritual anointing of the spirit, which is given to them.

By the oil of catechumens, the effect of the baptismal exorcisms is extended. Before they go to the font of life to be reborn, the candidates for baptism are strengthened to renounce sin and the devil.

By the use of the oil of the sick, to which St James is a witness, the sick receive a remedy for the illness of mind and body, so that they may have strength to bear suffering, resist evil and obtain the forgiveness of sins.



**Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop of the Forces, delivered the following Homily at the recent Chrism Mass:**

At this Mass, we focus on the holy oils, oils to be used in the administration of the Sacraments throughout the year. The oils accompany us from the start to the end of our lives: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, death. So, the Chrism Mass is an expression of the Church's sacramental care for us.

It is also time when priests renew the promises they made at their ordination. Priests, earthen vessels who dispense God's grace in the sacramental life of the Church. A gift we do well to handle with great reverence and humility.

At our baptism We all had the sign of the cross traced on our heads with Chrism. The head, the source of our thoughts and the words that come from our thoughts.

1. For priests, ordination places on your lips the Word of God. When you speak, when you preach, when you teach, when you give counsel, the faithful listen for God's voice. It's not so much your voice they seek. God has entrusted to you His sacred voice. You have a blessed opportunity to lead the faithful to God by speaking His word to them.

At Jesus' baptism and on the hill of Mount Tabor, the heavens opened, and the father said, "*this is my beloved son listen to him.*" In his journey to Jerusalem the Lord Jesus gave a mission to his followers: "*Whoever listens to you listens to me. And whoever rejects you, rejects me and the One who sent me.*"

The words of Consecration are, of course, the epitome of this when you speak in the person of Christ. As are the words of baptism. The Lord working through you. The words you speak are His, not yours.

Brothers, your words matter. And not only what you say but how you say it, your manner can often be more instructive. Be thoughtful and humble when you speak. And be faithful in your words to the truth.

2. In the Right of Ordination to the priesthood, your hands were anointed with the oil of chrism, the same Chrism we consecrate today. The bishop said "*The father anointed our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. May Jesus preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God.*"

Your hands were and remain anointed. To sanctify. To offer sacrifice. Look at your hands. Whether they are smooth and steady or get wrinkled with the passing of time, your hands are anointed with oil and not only as a symbol but as a sacramental instrument: they baptise and confirm; they bless; they absolve sin; they consecrate and offer the Bread of Life and the Chalice of Salvation to the faithful and they anoint the head and hands of the dying, opening the doors to eternity at the end of life. Sacred duties.

Remember the words of St. Teresa of Avila, "Christ has no hands on earth now but yours." Your hands are committed to labour which is, in itself, prayer and their work is to bring Christ's presence, compassion and peace to the people entrusted to your pastoral care. Brother priests, your hands have been anointed, consecrated. Use them carefully and only for what is good.

3. At your baptism a cross was traced on your chest with the oil of Catechumens. As the heart pumps blood through the body, keeping it alive, so the heart of the priest pumps the lifeblood of the Church, the Body of Christ, keeping it alive. St. John Vianney said: "the priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus ... when the heart is pure and simple, it cannot help loving because it has discovered the source of love which is God." There is no assessment on this on an OJAR but one expression of God's love as it may be reflected in our priestly life is worth more than every medal, every honour every promotion this world can offer.

The heart of the priest is what makes him authentic and credible in his service of others. Without a well-disposed heart we simply make noise.

In your heart there is no room for resentment or greed, selfishness or lust, no room for jealousy or calculation, no room for isolation or for doing it my way. When your heart is divided, your priesthood is fractured, your actions hollow.

And so, my brothers being men of a priestly heart, configure your thoughts to the mind of Christ so that all you say with your lips and all you do with your hands will bring Him, our High Priest to those we serve.



# *Shepherds in Uniform*

Throughout history, Catholic chaplains have stood beside soldiers in moments of courage, hardship, and sacrifice. The history of the armed forces is not only a story of battles and campaigns, but also of quiet ministry among those who served. Catholic chaplains have long provided the sacraments, counsel, and presence of the Church in the most demanding circumstances. In this feature, Dr. James Hagerty shares insights and research on chaplains from earlier generations whose witness continues to inspire today.

**FR. ARTHUR JOB WALLACE**

**A FORGOTTEN CHAPLAIN IN FORGOTTEN WARS**



Written by Dr. James Hagerty

On 10 September 1898, *The Tablet* published an obituary of Fr. Arthur Job Wallace a priest of the Diocese of Northampton. The obituary stated that Fr. Wallace had served as an army chaplain with British expeditions to West Africa and Burma.

Born in 1841, Arthur Job Wallace was raised in a Suffolk in an Anglican family. He studied at King Edward VI School, Bury St. Edmunds, and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, from where he graduated in 1864. At Cambridge, *The Tablet* reported, Wallace converted to Catholicism and 'adopted the religious views which gave the turning point to his career'. He entered St. Mary's College, Oscott, to train as a Catholic priest and was ordained in December 1867 by Bishop Amherst of Northampton.

In 1869 he became Rector of St. Pancras, Ipswich, and was described as 'a slightly eccentric character', once finishing a sermon by asking for three cheers for the Pope. He frequently walked from Ipswich to Woodbridge to say Mass and later had a church built at Woodbridge at his own expense. His priesthood took on a very different dimension when, in late-1873, he volunteered as an army chaplain to minister to British troops in the Third Ashanti War fought in the West African region known then as the Gold Coast and now as Ghana.

The British had been in conflict with the inland Ashanti Empire over lucrative trading rights and coastal access since 1823 and in 1867 established the British Gold Coast Protectorate. After Ashanti attacks on the Protectorate, a British force under Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived in late-1873 to impose British control. Wolseley's command included 23<sup>rd</sup> (later Royal Welch Fusiliers) and 42<sup>nd</sup> Regiments (later Black Watch Regiment), a battalion of the Rifle Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> West India Regiments, naval, marine, artillery and engineering detachments, and auxiliaries. British soldiers, wearing homespun grey uniforms instead of traditional red tunics, were successful with casualties in six battles being slight.

The climate and jungle terrain were so exacting for Europeans, however, that more soldiers died of disease than in combat. At the end of hostilities, Wolseley is reputed to have said: 'So ended the most horrible war I ever took part in' and that his tactics would instill a 'wholesome fear of British power.'

Some English newspapers expressed dissatisfaction with chaplaincy services to the expedition claiming that chaplains 'were never at the front'. *The Standard*, however, whose correspondent was with the expedition, stated that Fr. Edward Butler, a commissioned Catholic chaplain, and a Protestant chaplain, who had both arrived on 12 December 1873, in January 1874 accompanied the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment to the interior where they were attached to field hospitals. Soon after his arrival Fr. Butler was ordered to return to Colchester and was replaced by Fr. Wallace as a temporary chaplain. Fr. Wallace arrived on the Gold Coast in early March 1874, at which time hostilities had ended, but he was incapacitated by fever while ministering in military hospitals at Cape Coast Castle. For his brief service he received the Ashanti medal and *The Illustrated London News* recorded his ministry as 'an additional Roman Catholic chaplain'.

The Reverend John Laverack, a Wesleyan minister, also served as an army chaplain. In late 1873, he was sent out by the War Office in the troopship *Victor Emmanuel*. On arrival he was granted 'facilities for his work' and supplied with quarters and rations at the coast where, like Fr. Wallace, he worked in base hospitals. However, he did not minister to the troops at the front and returned on the *Victor Emmanuel*, now a converted hospital ship. Reverend Laverack was the first Wesleyan minister to accompany a military expedition and on receiving the Ashanti Star in 1874 he was the first to be decorated.

Fr. Wallace subsequently ministered in Madras for two years before being appointed to St. Mary's, Ipswich. In 1886 he again volunteered as a temporary army chaplain, this time to British troops serving in the Third Anglo-Burmese War. Begun in November 1885, the conflict was typical of colonial wars with the British fighting a determined enemy in unforgiving terrain and debilitating climatic conditions. Nearly 10,000 British and Indian troops of the Upper Burma Field Force, which included fourteen British regiments, were commanded by Major-General Sir Harry Prendergast. The historian

of the Royal Munster Fusiliers wrote: 'The campaign in Burma was not one of great battles, but it was one that called for the best qualities of the soldier—perseverance, endurance, and unremitting attention to duty. The work entailed dispersing bands of dacoits (local term for bandits) and was very hard particularly during the rains when a great part of the district was underwater.' For their services to the Field Force Fr. Wallace and Fr. Hugh O'Neill, a missionary, were Mentioned in Dispatches.

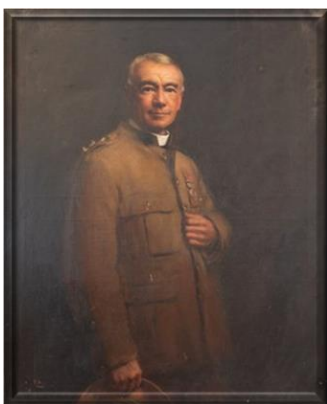
At the termination of his ministry in Burma in 1887, Fr. Wallace returned to Ipswich where, *The Tablet* reported, he was much respected by all denominations in the town' and was seen not as 'a narrow cleric but as a good all-round Englishman.' On learning of Fr. Wallace's death in 1898, Lieutenant-Colonel H J Woodward, late 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers, wrote to *The East Anglian*:

I served with Father Wallace in Burma ... No man ever did his duty more nobly than he. Perfectly fearless, he was both with regard to the enemy and to disease. I had to forbid him to go unprotected from one post to another. The country was swarming with Dacoits, whose cruelties to captured strangers are too horrible to relate. My old regiment suffered terribly from cholera, losing over 100 men in a few days. One night, leaving the mess hut, I bade Father Wallace 'Good night,' but seeing him turn away from his sleeping quarters towards the hospital, I asked if anyone was in immediate danger of death. He replied, 'No, but I have for some days past been sleeping in the hospital. I'm afraid of not being found if wanted suddenly. I always find a spare bed among the sick, and if it's wanted for a fresh case, they always move me on ...'

After a Requiem Mass, Fr. Wallace was borne to his grave by six soldiers of the Royal Artillery. It seems that the army had not forgotten an unarmed, brave chaplain who, without training or military experience, had ministered in two of sixty long-forgotten imperial wars and punitive expeditions fought by the British army during the second half of the nineteenth century.

#### References:

B. Bond (Ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns* (Hutchinson: London, 1994). *The Tablet*



## SAVE A STORY OF FAITH & SERVICE

### ***Help Restore a Rare Boer War Portrait***

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

Time, however, has taken its toll.

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

### **Why Restoration Matters**

Your support will allow specialist conservators to:

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

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

### **How You Can Help**

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

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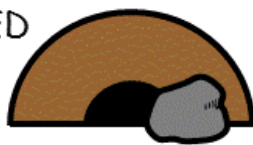
📱 *Or scan the QR code to contribute instantly*



# WORD SEARCH

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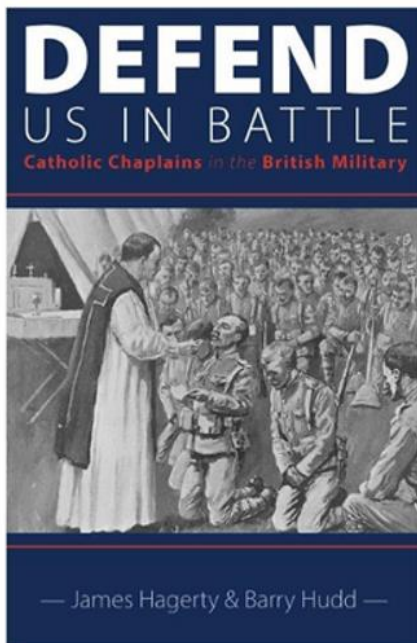


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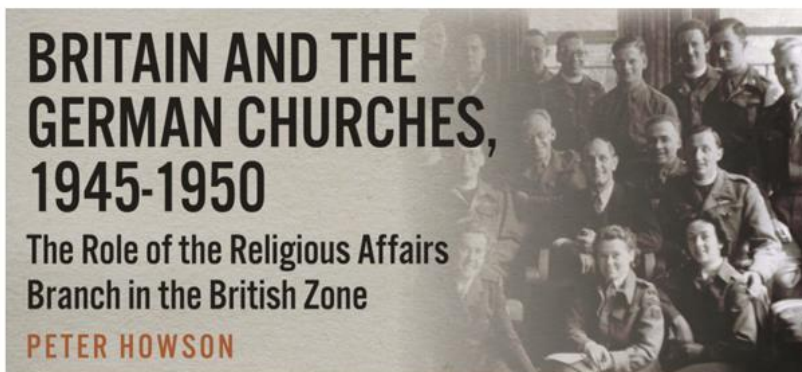
# Literature of Interest



Chaplains have served and continue to serve all branches of the British armed forces. The size and organization of the military and the nature of warfare has been transformed, but the chaplain's vocation remains unchanged.

This book traces the growth and development of Catholic chaplaincy to British armed forces from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century.

*Defend Us In Battle* describes the ministry of priests who over the centuries and across the world have voluntarily provided Catholic service personnel with the solace of religion far away from home and frequently in danger. There emerges a powerful narrative of priestly service not always known or recognized by those outside the military.



As a member of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department Rev Peter Howson served in Germany during the period 1977 to 1997.

More details are at:

[Britain and the German Churches, 1945-1950 - Boydell and Brewer](#)



## ORDER ONLINE

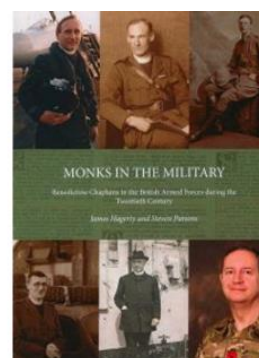
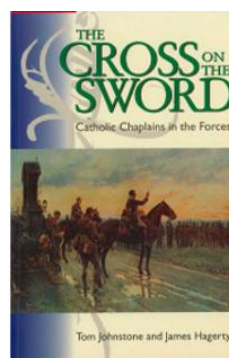
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Dr James Hagerty has written and co-written numerous books on Catholic history. His most recent research has been into Catholic chaplaincy within the British Armed Forces. You can find more information regarding his publications at:

<https://www.jameshagerty.co.uk/books/>



## CATHOLIC MILITARY ASSOCIATION

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

# 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.

# Lay Chaplaincy at Waterways

## Why Consider Waterways Chaplaincy as a Lay Chaplain?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Full training provided.

Interested in finding out more? Get in touch with Corinna at [corinnawwc@merciamarina.com](mailto:corinnawwc@merciamarina.com).



# What is Spiritual Direction?



Are you facing a challenge or a big decision?

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

Spiritual direction can help you during these times.

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

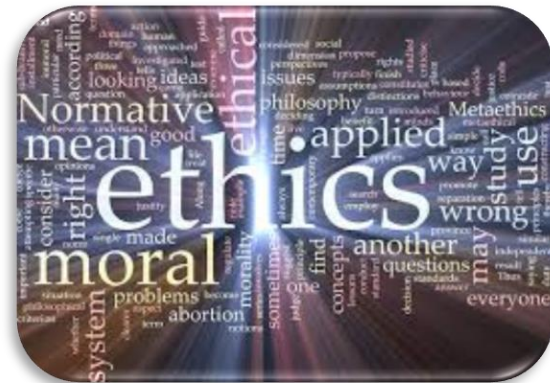
The aim is to have a closer relationship with God through prayer and how we live each day.

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

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

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

Everything you say is private and safe.



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

**Events >>>**

# 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



# International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2026

## TANGNEY TOURS

the pilgrim's choice



### Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May - Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May



**Cost: £950 per person**

Includes:

- Return flights and transfers to the hotel in Lourdes
- 4 nights full board accommodation at the Hotel Alba\*
- Pilgrimage registration, photograph and badge
- **Priority will be given to those booking before Easter**

*Single room supplement: £148 per person*

\* Other hotels may also be used subject to room availability at the hotel Alba

Military Pilgrims may apply through their chain of command for T&S from public funds or go to the Forces RC trusts for a non-public grant. For details contact your local RC Chaplain or:

Fr Nick Gosnell VG  
 Dean, Cathedral Church of St Michael & St George  
 Queens Avenue, Aldershot, GU11 2BY  
 Tel: 01252 315042 Mob: 07775 237099  
 Email: [stmichael.stgeorge@live.co.uk](mailto:stmichael.stgeorge@live.co.uk)



**The Lourdes Theme for 2026 the Annunciation**

**"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you"**

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## *Bishopric of The Forces Retreats*



Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary?

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

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

For further information please contact: [armyrcpaa21@gmail.com](mailto:armyrcpaa21@gmail.com)

**You are invited to  
take part in a  
Walking Pilgrimage  
to Assisi**

**10 - 17  
October  
2026**



Join with the Rt Rev Paul Mason, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Forces, and personnel from the Whole Force, to commemorate the 800th Anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi. We will walk 105 km of the Via di Francesco or Way of St Francis. Starting at the Umbrian town of Terni and finishing at the Shrine of St Francis in Assisi.

To express your interest to take part  
and for further information contact:  
[jeremy.wynne109@mod.gov.uk](mailto:jeremy.wynne109@mod.gov.uk)



From: The Reverend (Wing Commander) David E Skillen MA QTS BA (Hons) RAF



Principal Roman Catholic  
Chaplain (RAF)

The Chaplaincy Centre  
RAF Cosford  
Wolverhampton  
WV7 3EX

Email: [david\\_skillen100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:david_skillen100@mod.gov.uk)

19 Mar 26

### BISHOPRIC OF THE ARMED FORCES WALKING PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI – 10 TO 17 OCT 26

2026 marks the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi. Pope Leo has proclaimed a Franciscan Jubilee Year for 2026. This holy year invites the faithful to pilgrimage, particularly to Franciscan sites, offering special grace on the pilgrim, and focusing on peace, the ecology, and Franciscan spirituality.

To mark this Franciscan Jubilee Year, and to respond to the call of Pope Leo for pilgrimage, the Bishopric of the Forces is organising a walking pilgrimage along the Via di Francesco or Way of St Francis. We will start in the Umbrian town of Terni and walk 105km over 8 days through beautiful Umbrian Countryside finishing at the shrine of St Francis in Assisi. The paths we walk, and the villages we walk through, will have been familiar to St Francis. Daily walking distance will range from 8.2 to 24km. Our final day will be at leisure in Assisi.

Accommodation will be provided on a shared room, bed and breakfast basis in the Casa Nazareno Religious House in Spoleto. A packed lunch will be provided on each walking day. Casa Nazareno is run by the nuns of the Holy Family of Nazareth. The accommodation is ~~no~~ suite but simple, fitting for a pilgrimage of this type. The website of Casa Nazareno is [www.casanazareno.it/en/welcome-cas-nazareno/](http://www.casanazareno.it/en/welcome-cas-nazareno/)

We will fly from London Stansted with Ryan Air to Perugia on Sat 10 Oct at 0600. We will return from Perugia to London Stansted on Sat 17 Oct at 0945. We will be transported to our accommodation and to the start of each day's walk by minivan, which will return us to our accommodation each evening. The evening meal on the first and last night will be taken as a group. On the other evenings, meals are on a self-help basis. We are limited to 16 pilgrims and we would like a mix of RN, Army, RAF and MOD civil servants.

Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop of the Armed Forces, will lead the pilgrimage as he did on our similar successful pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in 2022, to Lisbon in 2023, and to Walsingham in 2024. There will be the opportunity for daily Mass and other devotions offered for peace in the world.

It is envisaged that you will need to take annual leave to take part in the pilgrimage, that you will need to arrange your own transport to and from the airhead, and arrange your own travel insurance. It is not envisaged that you will be able to make a claim against the public purse for T&S. That said, an Admin Order and JIs will be produced. Individuals are at liberty to approach their own chain of command and budget holder to discuss leave and funding options.

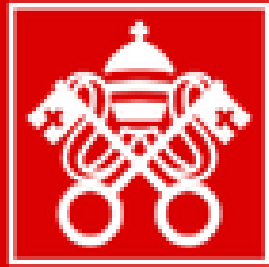
The overall cost of the pilgrimage per person is in the region of £800 to include flights, daily transfers, bed and breakfast accommodation on a shared basis, daily packed lunch on the walking days, Pilgrim Credential, and pilgrim T-shirt. The Service Roman Catholic Trusts have agreed to generously subsidise Whole Force personnel such that a personal contribution of £300 per pilgrim to take part is being sought.

For further information, or to register your interest to take part, please contact [Jeremy.wynne109@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Jeremy.wynne109@mod.gov.uk). Deadline for expressions of interest is cop 19 Apr.

Yours sincerely

*Reverend Dave Skillen*





VATICAN  
NEWS

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

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



# Online with Saints App



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

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

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

Discover much more information about the saints:

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

**# Access videos**

Turn on the subtitles in YouTube

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

## Catholic Military App is Live!



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

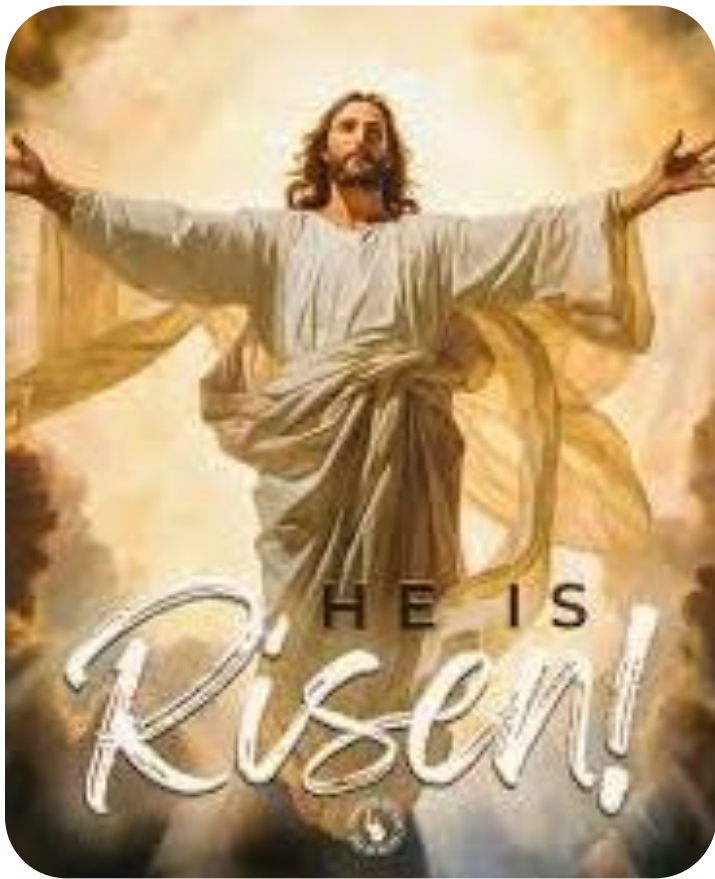
- ❖ It offers:
- ❖ Strong Catholic prayers, all downloaded so they can be accessed easily whilst on ship/ops/ex etc.
- ❖ Answers to 200+ questions about faith and the military.
- ❖ Prayers specifically for the military.
- ❖ Testimonies from serving Catholics.
- ❖ Inspiring military Saints and quotes.
- ❖ 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 April

Maundy Thursday – 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Good Friday – 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Holy Saturday – 4<sup>th</sup> April

Easter Sunday – 5<sup>th</sup> April

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter – 12<sup>th</sup> April

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – 19<sup>th</sup> April

St. George, Martyr, Patron of England  
– 23<sup>rd</sup> April (Solemnity)

St. Mark, Evangelist – 25<sup>th</sup> April

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – 26<sup>th</sup> April

## 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)