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Issue
36



"The great gift of Easter is hope." Basil C Hume.



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

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



Welcome to Issue 36 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As we gather to celebrate Easter, we rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of our faith and the triumph of life over death. This Holy season calls us to renewal, hope and deep gratitude for God's boundless love.

May the joy of Easter fill your hearts with peace and strengthen your faith as we walk together in the light of Christ. Let us embrace His message of love and share it with the world, bringing hope to those in need. Wishing you all a blessed and joyful Easter! Hallelujah! He is Risen!

Renewing Our Faith, Hope, and Thankfulness This Easter



As we enter the sacred season of Easter, we are reminded of the profound love of God, who sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. Easter is not just a celebration of Christ's victory over death; it is also a call for us to renew our faith, deepen our hope, and express our appreciation for the boundless mercy of our Lord.

Strengthening Our Faith - Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God. During Easter, we reflect on the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus and allow His sacrifice to strengthen our trust in Him. We can deepen our faith by engaging in prayer, meditating on Scripture, and receiving the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. By doing so, we open our hearts to the grace of God, allowing Him to work powerfully in our lives.

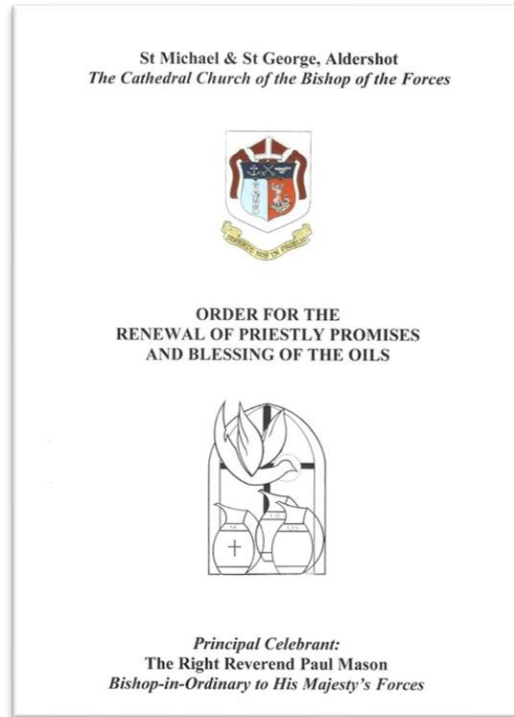
Deepening Our Hope - Easter is a season of hope because it reminds us that, through Christ, we are given new life. No matter the struggles or uncertainties we face, the Resurrection assures us that God's promises are true and that He has a divine plan for each of us. We strengthen our hope by focusing on God's eternal promises and placing our trust in His providence. Acts of kindness, uplifting one another in faith, and trusting in God's timing help us to hold onto the hope that Easter brings.

Embracing Thankfulness - Thankfulness is a natural response to God's overwhelming love. When we contemplate the sacrifice Jesus made for us, we are moved to live lives of thanksgiving. We can show our appreciation by offering our prayers of thanks, serving others with love, and recognizing God's blessings in our daily lives. By expressing our gratitude, we cultivate a heart that is more open to joy and peace, fully embracing the gift of salvation.

This Easter, let us commit to growing in faith, hope, and thankfulness. Let us allow the light of Christ to fill our hearts, so that we may be true witnesses of His love and bring His joy to the world.

May the Risen Christ bless you and your loved ones with renewed faith, enduring hope, and abundant gratefulness!

Chrism Mass
St Michael and St George's, Aldershot
Wednesday 16th April, 2025



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.



St Joan of Arc Catterick Garrison



Fr. Kevin Dow is the current Military Chaplain at St Joan of Arc, Catterick Garrison. On Maundy Thursday, the PRCC(A) Fr. Stephen Sharkey, concelebrated and preached at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, whilst Fr. Kevin presided.



Night prayer was said in St Joan of Arc at the Altar of Repose.

Ecumenical Workings

Whether you are familiar with the Defence Christian Network (DCN) or hearing about it for the first time, we invite you to discover its purpose and impact. Lt Col Simon Maggs has kindly contributed an insightful article that sheds light on the heart of the DCN and how it serves the defence faith community.

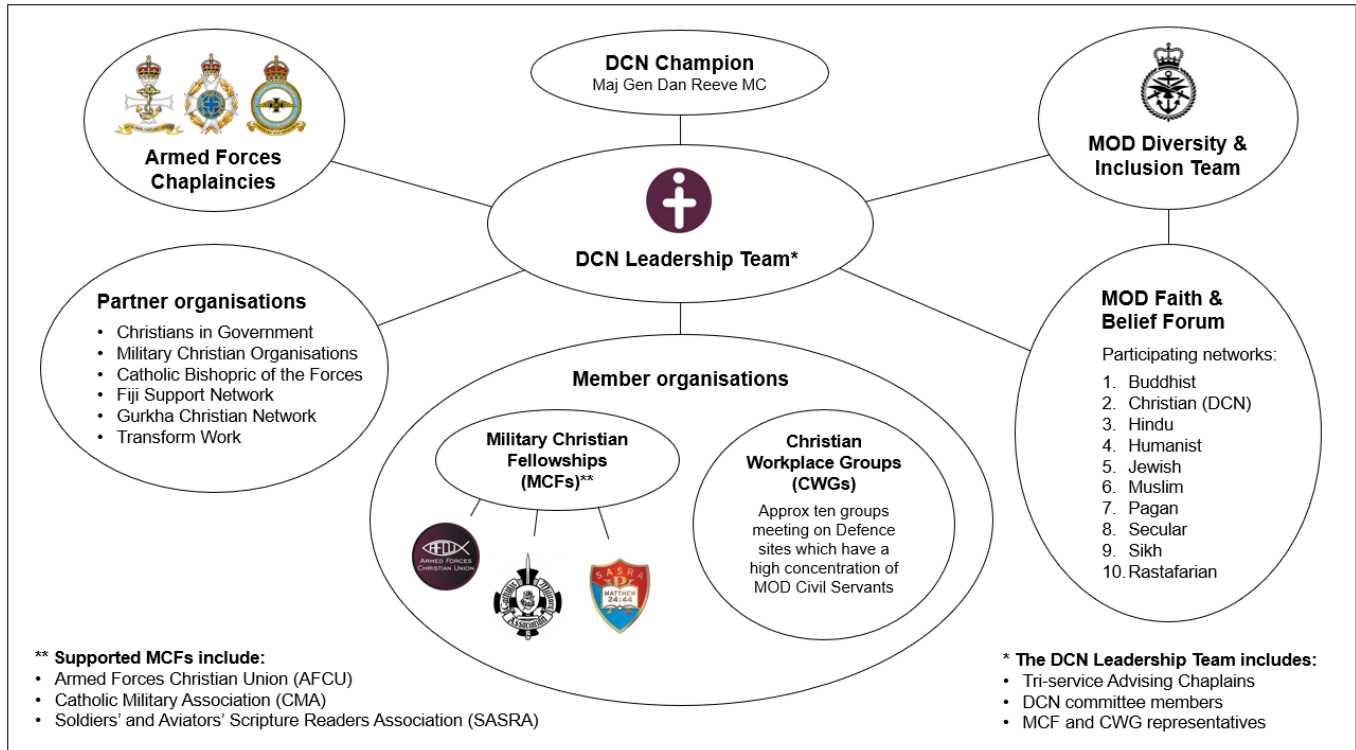
The Defence Christian Network – the first five years:

Five years ago, the Defence Christian Network (DCN) was formed in response to changes in Defence culture and the emergence of new opportunities to support serving Christians. The main drivers included a lack of Christian representation within MOD Diversity & Inclusion (D&I), the absence of a Christian employee network for MOD Civil Servants and the need for an outlet for Christians to fulfil their mandatory D&I appraisal objectives. In addition, the requirement for Christians to contribute towards Defence engagement with wider society further supported the case for this new organisation. Following a considered period of discernment, the scope for the DCN was decided in early 2019. It was agreed that the DCN would be a unified, quad-service, all-ranks, multi-denominational network, with the Nicene Creed as its basis of belief. The DCN committee was formally commissioned in prayer at the Service of Prayer and Remembrance for the Armed Forces held in the Guards' Chapel in November 2019. In the presence of the Heads of Chaplaincy, members of the MOD D&I Team and a large body of Defence Christians, the DCN was publicly confirmed in its agreed remit.



Commissioning the DCN in prayer at the Service of Prayer and Remembrance in 2019

The enduring mission of the DCN is to "Connect, support and inspire Christians in Defence, contribute to MOD culture and Whole Force wellbeing and support Defence engagement with Christians in wider society." It supports three Military Christian Fellowships (MCFs), including the Armed Forces Christian Union (AFCU), the Catholic Military Association (CMA) and the Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association (SASRA). The DCN also supports around ten Christian Workplace Groups (CWGs) which meet on Defence sites which have a high concentration of MOD Civil Servants.



Organisational chart for the DCN and its connections with member / partner organisations

As a lay Christian organisation, the DCN seeks to work with the Chaplaincies in complementary ways and (in a similar manner to other World Faith Networks) is supported by Advising Chaplains. The DCN remains hugely grateful to the Heads of Chaplaincy for providing this support, which also informs the work of other Military Christian Organisations which work alongside the DCN. Over the course of the past five years, the DCN has been hugely grateful for the tri-service guidance from RN, Army and RAF Chaplains, which has been provided in addition to their core Chaplaincy duties.

Following its formation, the DCN initially focused on raising its profile within Defence and building connections between its member organisations. As an ecumenical network, it was well placed to provide continuity for existing annual events including the Defence response to 'Thy Kingdom Come' (an ecumenical season of prayer held between Ascension Day and Pentecost Sunday) and the annual 'Service of Prayer and Remembrance for the Armed Forces'. Having adapted to the pandemic during its first year of operation, the DCN has continued to offer a mix of online, hybrid and physical events designed to encourage Defence Christians and engage with Defence culture.

These events have provided welcome opportunities for Christian unity and mutual support across services, denominations and cultures.

In May 2023, the DCN provided uniformed representation at the global Ascension Day launch service for Thy Kingdom Come, followed by daily prayers via its YouTube channel. Throughout the following nine days (or Novena), pre-recorded prayers were led by representatives drawn from across the Defence Christian community. These included readers from the Afro-Caribbean, Fijian and Gurkha Christian communities, which have permanent representation on the DCN Leadership Team. These groups enrich and inform our work, as together we seek to follow Christ and support each other, within an inter-cultural setting.

Defence Christian groups leading daily prayers on YouTube for Thy Kingdom Come 2023



Another initiative which touched on our shared Christian heritage was the 'Gospel Worship Retreats' held at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre in 2022 and 2023. Run as a collaboration between the DCN and its Advising Chaplains, these retreats were supported by a theologian, a third-generation Pentecostal choir director and an award-winning gospel artist. For three days, a scratch choir of military personnel and MOD Civil Servants was immersed in prayer, teaching and singing on the theme of gospel worship. On the final day, military personnel donned their uniform and a performance was recorded for BBC News. Most encouraging of all, many delegates reported experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit during worship, leading to a renewal of faith.

Further information can be found at: <https://defencechristians.org.uk/>

In his article, Lt Col Simon Maggs notes that the DCN supports three Military Christian Fellowships (MCFs): the Armed Forces Christian Union (AFCU), the Catholic Military Association (CMA) and the Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association (SASRA). We would like to offer you further information on each of these organisations to provide a clearer understanding of their roles and purpose.



The Armed Forces' Christian Union (AFCU), is an interdenominational, tri-service fellowship of Christians who wish to grow in their faith and share it with those with whom they serve. It seeks to encourage and build up Christians in the Armed Forces in their faith and to support evangelism and does this by producing literature, providing prayer support for serving members, organising activities and teaching holidays and weekends, and by personal visits. It is funded only by its members and has a small paid staff based in our office in Watchfield, Swindon. <https://afcu.org.uk/>

Their mission is: To encourage those who are already Christians in the Armed Forces to live out and develop their faith, to act as 'salt and light', and through them to encourage others to come to a committed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To work for unity amongst Christians in the Armed Forces. To support the Armed Forces in their drive to be a force for good, providing a Godly influence upon military culture and to expose the role of Christians in the Armed Forces to the wider Christian community.



The Catholic Military Association exist to support Catholics in the UK Armed Forces. They are a lay organisation of the faithful whose members cooperate to support Catholicism in the UK Armed Forces. They strive to inspire one-another in the faith, to grow through prayer and the sacraments and to offer up their sufferings, persevere together in the universal call to holiness. They are serving personnel supporting others. <https://www.catholicmilitaryassociation.org.uk/>

Their mission is: to continually cultivate a sincere and deep catholic practice across the Armed Forces, including MOD Civil Servants, Veterans and immediate families and to improve public understanding of the catholic religion.



The Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association (SASRA). Their scripture readers work alongside the Army and RAF Chaplaincies, supporting Chaplains and the Welfare Teams in the provision of services to individual soldiers, air force personnel and their families. SASRA benefits from Chaplaincy Liaison Officers who help to understand the unique role and responsibilities that modern Chaplains fulfil, with our Scripture Readers always looking to support and encourage them as they pursue their vital Ministry to the British Armed Forces. Their HQ is based in Aldershot. <https://sasra.org.uk/>

Saints Days in April



St George, Martyr, Patron of England - 23rd April:

Countless stories are told about St. George, including the famous episode of the dragon and the girl saved by the saint. According to the standard version of the legend, we hear that in the city of Selem in Libya, there was a large pond where a terrible dragon lived. To appease it, the inhabitants offered him two sheep a day and later a sheep and a child drawn by lot. One day the king's daughter was chosen, and while she was heading toward the pond, George passed by and pierced the dragon with his spear; a gesture that became a symbol of faith triumphing over evil.

George, whose name in Greek means "farmer," was born to a Christian family in Cappadocia around the year 280. After moving to Palestine, he joined the army of Diocletian. When the emperor issued the edict of persecution against Christians in 303, George gave all his belongings to the poor and, in front of Diocletian himself, tore the document apart and professed his faith in Christ. For this he suffered terrible torture and was eventually beheaded.

Shortly after his death, a basilica was erected over the place of his burial in Lydda (modern-day Lod, in Israel). His relics are still visible today.

Among the most ancient documents attesting to the existence of St. George, a Greek epigraph from 368 found in Heraclea of Bethany speaks of the "house or church of the saints and triumphant martyrs George and companions". A *Passio Georgii* was classified among the hagiographic works by the Gelasianum Decree of 496 and deemed apocryphal. There were many later redactions of the *Passio*, which informed subsequent legends.

The crusaders contributed a great deal to transforming the figure of St. George the martyr into a holy warrior, seeing in the killing of the dragon a symbol for the defeat of Islam; Richard I of England ("the Lionheart") invoked him as the protector of all soldiers. With the Normans the cult of St.

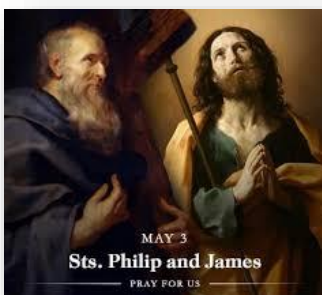
George became firmly rooted in England where, in 1348, King Edward III established the Order of the Knights of St. George. Throughout the Middle Ages his figure inspired a great deal of epic literature.

St George is considered the patron of knights, soldiers, scouts, fencers and archers, among others; he is also invoked against the plague and leprosy, and against venomous snakes. In the absence of certain information about his life, in 1969 the Church changed the liturgical feast of St George to an optional memorial on the universal calendar. However, this change did not affect devotion to the saint. The relics of the saint are found in different places of the world; in Rome the church of San Giorgio al Velabro has housed his skull from the time of Pope Zachariah.

As in the case of other saints wrapped in legend, the story of St George serves to remind the world of a fundamental idea, that good ultimately triumphs over evil. The fight against evil is a constant in human history. It is a battle cannot we cannot win on our own. Saint George was able to kill the dragon because God was acting in and through him. With Christ, evil will never have the last word.

Reference: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/saints/04/23/st--george--martyr.html>

Saints Days in May



The Feast of Ss Philip and James, Apostles - 3rd May:

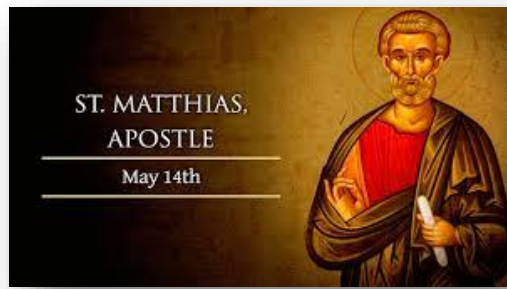
Philip was born in Bethsaida, Galilee. He may have been a disciple of John the Baptist and is mentioned as one of the Apostles in the lists of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and in Acts. Aside from the lists, he is mentioned only in John in the New Testament. He was called by Jesus Himself and brought Nathanael to Christ.

Philip was present at the miracle of the loaves and fishes, when he engaged in a brief dialogue with the Lord, and was the Apostle approached by the Hellenistic Jews from Bethsaida to introduce them to Jesus. Just before the Passion, Jesus answered Philip's query to show them the Father, but no further mention of Philip is made in the New Testament beyond his listing among the Apostles awaiting the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room. According to tradition he preached in Greece and was crucified upside down at Hierapolis under Emperor Domitian.

St James the Less, the author of the first Catholic Epistle, was the son of Alphaeus of Cleophas. His mother Mary was either a sister or a close relative of the Blessed Virgin, and for that reason, according to Jewish custom, he was sometimes called the brother of the Lord. The Apostle held a distinguished position in the early Christian community of Jerusalem. St Paul tells us he was a witness of the Resurrection of Christ; he is also a "pillar" of the Church, whom St Paul consulted about the Gospel.

According to tradition, he was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and was at the Council of Jerusalem about the year 50. The historians Eusebius and Hegesippus relayed that St James was martyred for the Faith by the Jews in the Spring of the year 62, although they greatly esteemed his person and had given him the surname of "James the Just."

Tradition has always recognised him as the author of the Epistle that bears his name. Internal evidence based on the language, style, and teaching of the Epistle reveals its author as a Jew familiar with the Old Testament, and a Christian thoroughly grounded in the teachings of the Gospel. External evidence from the early Fathers and Councils of the Church confirmed its authenticity and canonicity. Saints Philip and James share a feast day because their relics were brought to Rome at the same time in early May.



The Feast of St Matthias, Apostle - 14th May:

Mathias was one of the first to follow our Saviour; and he was an eye-witness of all His divine actions up to the very day of the Ascension. He was one of the seventy-two disciples; but our Lord had not conferred upon him the dignity of an apostle. And yet, he was to have this great glory, for it was of him that David spoke, when he prophesied that another should take the bishopric left vacant by the apostasy of Judas the traitor.

In the interval between Jesus' Ascension and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the apostolic college had to complete the mystic number fixed by our Lord Himself, so that there might be the twelve on that solemn day, when the Church, filled with the Holy Ghost, was to manifest herself to the Synagogue. The lot fell on Mathias; he shared with his brother-apostles the persecution in Jerusalem, and, when the time came for the ambassadors of Christ to separate, he set out for the countries allotted to him. Tradition tells us that these were Cappadocia and the provinces bordering on the Caspian Sea.

The virtues, labour, and sufferings of St Mathias have not been handed down to us: this explains the lack of proper lessons on his life, such as we have for the feasts of the rest of the apostles. Clement of Alexandria records in his writings several sayings of our holy apostle. One of these is so very appropriate to the spirit of the present season, that we consider it a duty to quote it. 'It behooves us to combat the flesh, and make use of it, without pampering it by unlawful gratifications. As to the soul, we must develop her power by faith and knowledge.' How profound is the teaching contained in these few words! Sin has deranged the order which the Creator had established. It gave the outward man such a tendency to grovel in things which degrade him, that the only means left us for the restoration of the image and likeness of God unto which we were created, is the forcible subjection of the body to the spirit. But the spirit itself, that is, the soul, was also impaired by original sin, and her inclinations were made prone to evil; what is to be her protection? Faith and knowledge. Faith humbles her, and then exalts and rewards her; and the reward is knowledge.

Reference: <https://diocesehn.org.uk/feast-day/the-feast-of-st-matthias-apostle-3/>



1. At Christ's crucifixion, what did soldiers place on his head?
2. For what of Christ's did the soldiers cast lots?
3. For how many pieces of silver did Judas betray Christ?
4. How did Judas betray Christ?
5. Christ was led away to which high priest first?
6. What was the name of the man who requested Jesus' body for burial?
7. With what was Jesus' side pierced?
8. Which disciple wanted to see the imprint of the nails before he would believe?
9. Who carried the cross for Christ?
10. For how long did Jesus remain after his resurrection before he ascended into heaven?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 36 will be published in Issue 37 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com Answers to Newsletter Issue 35: 1. Egypt, 2. Fat Tuesday, 3. 40 days Jesus spent in the desert, 4. Fasting, Almsgiving, prayer, 5. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, 6. Arms crossed in prayer, 7. Joseph of Arimathea, 8. 14, 9. Passion death & the resurrection of Jesus, 10. Sanctuary Lamp.

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've read in the newsletter? Or perhaps a question or idea you'd 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's 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!

Event >>>

65th International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2025



The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 15th May 2025, returning Monday 19th May 2025.

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? 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.

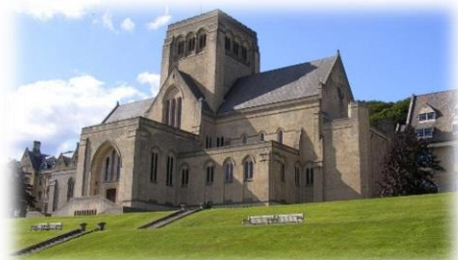
For 2025, Douai Abbey in Berkshire, St Beuno's Centre in North Wales, and Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire.



DOUAI ABBEY 10 - 13 JUN 25



ST BEUNO'S CENTRE 13 - 16 OCT 25

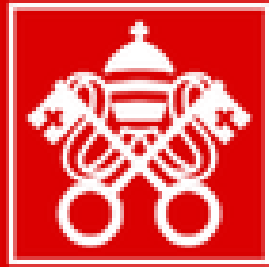


AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 10 - 13 Nov 25

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 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 Francis, 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 April & May

Maundy Thursday – *17th April*

Good Friday – *18th April*

Holy Saturday – *19th April*

Easter Sunday, Vigil – *20th April*

St George, Martyr, Patron of England
(Solemnity) – *23rd April*

St Philip & St James, Apostles (Feast) – *3rd
May*

St Matthias, Apostle (Feast) – *14th May*

The Ascension of the Lord (Solemnity) – *29th
May*

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Feast) – *29th May*

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