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Rejoice!

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness" Desmond Tutu



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

*The Revd. Fr. Ian Stevenson CF
Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain
(Army)*



Welcome to our Easter issue of the newsletter.

The last couple of years have been tough and anxious times for us all due to such events as the pandemic. Global injustice and conflict continues everyday but, the joy of Easter and the meaning behind it gives us renewed hope and faith in God's love. It is with that optimism, we welcome our first eastern rite chaplain from Ukraine into the British Army. And, it is with such revitalisation that gives us the strength to move forward and be confident in our belief. Alleluia! He is risen!

Celebrate the
resurrection of
our Lord!

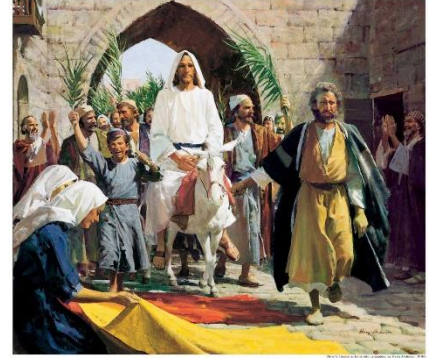
Happy
EASTER



Easter

Easter is the most important festival in the Christian calendar. It is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, three days after he was crucified.

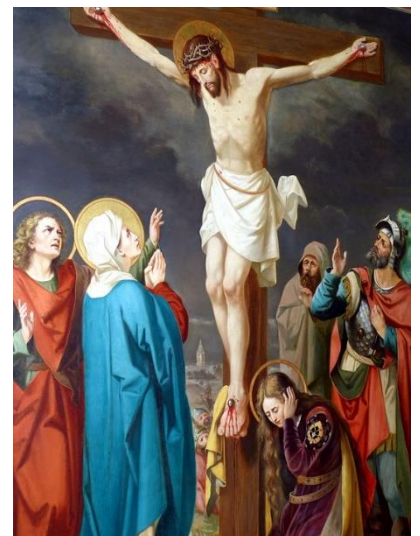
For the past 6 weeks, we have observed the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert by praying, fasting and almsgiving in order to prepare ourselves for Jesus's suffering, death and resurrection. The purpose of that period, we know as Lent, has helped us to grow in our faith and become spiritually stronger. Holy week began with Palm Sunday where we recalled Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem.

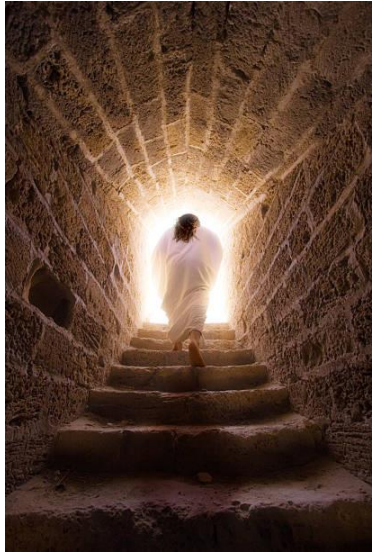


On Thursday of Holy week, Maundy Thursday, we remember the 'Last Supper' when Jesus ate the Passover Meal with his disciples. The Passover meal originally celebrated the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. The Last Supper was a meal eaten by Christ with his disciples on the night prior to his crucifixion. During the meal Jesus explained to his disciples that the wine and bread that they would eat would signify that he was to become the sacrificial lamb by which sins are forgiven and reconciliation with God can happen. Hence, the Eucharist was established.



Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. This is a day of mourning where we remember Jesus's suffering and death on the cross. The Bible tells us that the Jewish religious leaders, who had condemned Jesus the night before for claiming to be the son of God and King of the Jews, took him to the Romans for sentencing. Crucifixion was the highest form of criminal punishment at the time. Although called Good Friday, it is a day of sombre reflection, the word 'Good' is the designator of religious observance in the sense of 'observed as a holy day' (OED).





Following his crucifixion on Good Friday, Jesus's body is taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. A huge stone is positioned and covers the entrance which is then guarded by Roman soldiers. On the Sunday, Mary Magdalene and some of the disciples visit the tomb. They find the stone has been moved and Jesus's body has gone. Jesus is discovered later that day very much alive. Easter Sunday marks the resurrection of Jesus, it also represents Christ's triumph over death and the promise of eternal life for those who are willing to follow him.

Hope is one of the most important gifts we will receive and that is what the Easter message brings to us. We have been strengthened by our journey and can stand together in proclaiming: Alleluia! He is Risen.



Lord, the resurrection of Your Son has given us new life and renewed hope. Help us to live as new people in pursuit of the Christian ideal. Grant us wisdom to know what we must do, the will to want to do it, the courage to undertake it, the perseverance to continue to do it, and the strength to complete it.

Amen.

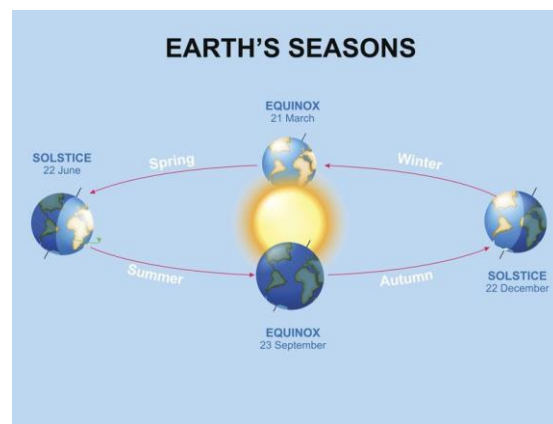
Why does the Easter date change every year?

Have you often wondered why Easter falls on different dates every year?



Deciding what date the Resurrection of Jesus was to be observed and celebrated caused much controversy in early Christianity between the West and East. This dispute was known as the 'Paschal Controversies' and was not finally resolved until the 8th Century. In Turkey, Christians observed the day of the crucifixion on the same day the Jews celebrated the Passover offering, i.e. the 14th day of the first full moon of spring, 14th Nisan*. The Resurrection was observed two days later on 16 Nisan*, regardless of the day of the week. In the West the Resurrection of Jesus was celebrated on the first day of the week, Sunday, when Jesus had risen from the dead. Subsequently, Easter was always celebrated on the first Sunday after the 14th day of the month of Nisan*. Gradually, the churches chose the Sunday celebration and the 'quartodecimans' ('14th day' supporters) remained a minority. The Council of Nicea in 325AD decreed that Easter should be observed on the first following the first full moon after the spring equinox (21st March). Therefore, Easter can fall on any Sunday between 22nd March and 25th April.

*Nisan - (in the Jewish calendar) the seventh month of the civil and first of the religious year, usually coinciding with parts of March and April.



Easter Traditions

It is always fascinating to see how others celebrate occasions such as Easter and there are many traditions both secular and religious. We have listed a few for your interest:



Sending Easter Lilies - Easter lilies are steeped in meaning in many cultures around the world. They are a symbol of purity and hope. It is believed that the flowers sprouted where Christ's blood and tears fell during the crucifixion as well as in the garden of Gethsemane before his betrayal.

Flying Kites - This Good Friday tradition originates in Bermuda, where it is said that a local school teacher used a kite to demonstrate Jesus's ascension into heaven for his students. Bermudians now hold an annual Good Friday Kite Festival.



Hot Cross Buns - they are symbolic of the crucifixion. Each bun is decorated with a cross made from flour paste which represents the cross on which Christ died. The spices in hot cross buns are said to represent the spices that were used to embalm Christ after his death.

Easter Eggs - Throughout history, people across the world gave each other eggs at spring fetivals to mark the seasons. Early Christians in Mesopotamia dyed eggs in the period after Easter. This practice was adopted by the Orthodox Churches and from there it spread to Western Europe. Eggs represent new life and rebirth and it is believed that is why this old custom was absorbed into Easter celebrations.





Easter Trees - Decorating Easter trees is a custom that is rooted in Germany. Traditional trees were branches in a vase hung with brightly coloured eggs. A variation on the Easter tree tradition takes its inspiration from the bible, with families creating ornaments based on scripture, starting with Genesis and ending with the resurrection. During Lent, one ornament per day is added for the 40 days of Lent or just one per week until Holy Week, when an egg is added counting down to Easter.

Simnel Cake - This cake is a type of fruit cake that contains lots of marzipan and is traditionally eaten at Easter. It used to be associated with Mothering Sunday. When people were fasting during Lent, Mothering Sunday appearing in the middle of the fast, offered a respite from the 40 days of hardship. Mothering Sunday is not Mothers Day but the day when people visited their Mother Church or Cathedral on the 4th Sunday of Lent. The cake is decorated with a marzipan top and eleven marzipan balls, each symbolizing Jesus's disciples (minus Judas).



Easter Bunny - The Bible makes no mention of a rabbit delivering Easter Eggs to well-behaved children on Easter Sunday, however, the Easter Bunny has become a prominent symbol of Easter time. The exact origins of this animal are unclear but it is known that rabbits are prolific procreators and are an ancient symbol of fertility and new life. It is believed that German immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania, USA in the 1700s had a tradition of an egg-laying Hare called "Osterhase" and the custom spread in America.

Pope Francis' Homily - Easter Vigil 2022



Many writers have evoked the beauty of starlit nights. The nights of war, however, are riven by streams of light that portend death. On this night, brothers and sisters, let us allow the women of the Gospel to lead us by the hand, so that, with them, we may glimpse the first rays of the dawn of God's life rising in the darkness of our world. As the shadows of night were dispelled before the quiet coming of the light, the women set out for the tomb, to anoint the body of Jesus. There they had a disconcerting experience. First, they discovered that the tomb was empty; then they saw two figures in dazzling garments who told them that Jesus was risen. Immediately they ran back to proclaim the news to the other disciples (cf. Lk 24:1-10). They saw, they heard, they proclaimed. With these three verbs, may we too enter into the passover of the Lord from death to life.

The women saw. The first proclamation of the resurrection was not a statement to be unpacked, but a sign to be contemplated. In a burial ground, near a grave, in a place where everything should be orderly and peaceful, the women "found the stone rolled away from the tomb; but when they went in, they did not find the body" (vv. 2-3). Easter begins by upsetting our expectations. It comes with the gift of a hope that surprises and amazes us. Yet it is not easy to welcome that gift. At times - we must admit - this hope does not find a place in our hearts. Like the women in the Gospel, we are overtaken by questions and doubts, and our first reaction before the unexpected sign is one of fear: "They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground" (v. 5). All too often we look at life and reality with downcast eyes; we fix our gaze only on this passing day, disenchanted by the future, concerned only with ourselves and our needs, settled into the prison of our apathy, even as we keep complaining that things will never change. In this way, we halt before the tomb of resignation and fatalism, and we bury the joy of living. Yet tonight the Lord wants to give us different eyes, alive with hope that fear, pain and death will not have the last word over us. Thanks to Jesus' paschal mystery, we can make the leap from nothingness to life. "Death will no longer be able to rob our life" (K. RAHNER), for that life is now completely and eternally embraced by the boundless love of God. True, death can fill us with dread; it can paralyze us. But the Lord is risen! Let us lift up our gaze, remove the veil of sadness and sorrow from our eyes, and open our hearts to the hope that God brings!

In the second place, the women heard. After they had seen the empty tomb, the two men in dazzling garments said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (vv. 5-6). We do well to listen to those words and to repeat them: He is not here! Whenever we think we have understood everything there is to know about God, and can pigeonhole him in our own ideas and categories, let us repeat to ourselves: He is not here! Whenever we seek him only in times of emotion, so often passing, and moments of need, only to set him aside and forget about him in the rest of our daily life and decisions, let us repeat: He is not here! And whenever we think we can imprison him in our words, in our formulas, and in our customary ways

of thinking and acting, and neglect to seek him in the darkest corners of life, where there are people who weep, who struggle, suffer and hope, let us repeat: He is not here!

May we too hear the question asked of the women: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" We cannot celebrate Easter if we continue to be dead; if we remain prisoners of the past; if in our lives we lack the courage to let ourselves be forgiven by God who forgives everything, the courage to change, to break with the works of evil, to decide for Jesus and his love. If we continue to reduce faith to a talisman, making God a lovely memory from times past, instead of encountering him today as the living God who desires to change us and to change our world. A Christianity that seeks the Lord among the ruins of the past and encloses him in the tomb of habit is a Christianity without Easter. Yet the Lord is risen! Let us not tarry among the tombs, but run to find him, the Living One! Nor may we be afraid to seek him also in the faces of our brothers and sisters, in the stories of those who hope and dream, in the pain of those who we suffer: God is there!

Finally, the women proclaimed. What did they proclaim? The joy of the resurrection. Easter did not occur simply to console those who mourned the death of Jesus, but to open hearts to the extraordinary message of God's triumph over evil and death. The light of the resurrection was not meant to let the women bask in a transport of joy, but to generate missionary disciples who "return from the tomb" (v. 9) in order to bring to all the Gospel of the risen Christ. That is why, after seeing and hearing, the women ran to proclaim to the disciples the joy of the resurrection. They knew that the others might think they were mad; indeed, the Gospel says that the women's words "seemed to them an idle tale" (v. 11). Yet those women were not concerned for their reputation, for preserving their image; they did not contain their emotions or measure their words. They had only the fire in their hearts with which to bear the news, the proclamation: "The Lord is risen!"

And how beautiful is a Church that can run this way through the streets of our world! Without fear, without schemes and stratagems, but solely with the desire to lead everyone to the joy of the Gospel. That is what we are called to do: to experience the risen Christ and to share the experience with others; to roll away the stone from the tomb where we may have enclosed the Lord, in order to spread his joy in the world. Let us make Jesus, the Living One, rise again from all those tombs in which we have sealed him. Let us set him free from the narrow cells in which we have so often imprisoned him. Let us awaken from our peaceful slumber and let him disturb and inconvenience us. Let us bring him into our everyday lives: through gestures of peace in these days marked by the horrors of war, through acts of reconciliation amid broken relationships, acts of compassion towards those in need, acts of justice amid situations of inequality and of truth in the midst of lies. And above all, through works of love and fraternity.

Brothers and sisters our hope has a name: the name of Jesus. He entered the tomb of our sin; he descended to those depths where we feel most lost; he wove his way through the tangles of our fears, bore the weight of our burdens and from the dark abyss of death restored us to life and turned our mourning into joy. Let us celebrate Easter with Christ! He is alive! Today, too, he walks in our midst, changes us and sets us free. Thanks to him, evil has been robbed of its power; failure can no longer hold us back from starting anew; and death has become a passage to the stirrings of new life. For with Jesus, the Risen Lord, no night will last forever; and even in the darkest night, in that darkness, the morning star continues to shine.

In this darkness that you are living, Mr. Mayor, Parliamentarians, the thick darkness of war, of cruelty, we are all praying, praying with you and for you this night. We are praying for all the suffering. We can only give you our company, our prayer and say to you: "Courage! We are accompanying you!" And also to say to you the greatest thing we are celebrating today: Christòs voskrés! Christ is risen!

(<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/251001/easter-vigil-2022-full-text-of-pope-francis-homily> - accessed 17 Apr 2022)

'Around Our Churches'



The Cathedral Church of St. Michael and St. George
Aldershot.

There has been much activity at St Michael and St George's recently. On Sunday 3rd April, Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of the Forces, Bishop Paul Mason, for the Royal Air Force.



Left to Right: Deacon Dave Skillen (PRCC RAF), Deacon Neil Galloway,
Cathedral Verger, Tony Hyman, Bishop Paul Mason, Fr. Nick Gosnell (VG)



Left to Right: Deacon Neil Galloway, Deacon Dave Skillen,
Bishop Paul Mason, Fr. James Mealy



Clergy and Congregation outside the Cathedral of the Forces

Chrism Mass



Tuesday 5th April saw the Military clergy from the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force gather for Chrism Mass. Chrism Mass is an annual event that brings together the Bishop, Priests, Deacons and Lay people to celebrate the blessing of the oils of Catechumens, Chrism and sick. The Chaplains also renew their priestly vows and commitments in front of the people.



Military Clergy and the Bishop of the Forces on the altar at St Michael & St George



PQO COURSE – ARMY RC CHAPLAINS

JAN – MAR '22

The passing out parade for Commissioning Short Course 214 took place at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) on Saturday 26th March 2022. Fr. Volodymyr Sampara is our newest Chaplain to Commission and complete training. Many congratulations and prayers go with him for his future ministry within the military.



Bishop Paul Mason, Fr. Volodymyr Sampara & Fr. Ian Stevenson



Bishop Paul Mason & Fr. Volodymyr Sampara



Fr. Volodymyr Sampara



Fr. Ian Stevenson & Fr. Volodymyr Sampara

'A Chaplains Journey'

By Fr. Volodymyr Sampara



As we congratulate Fr. Volodymyr on his recent commissioning into the Royal Army Chaplains Department, he has kindly written an article for the newsletter on his journey to becoming a Chaplain within the British Military.



A day before my Commissioning Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, I met the Bishop of the Armed Forces, Bishop Paul Mason and Fr. Ian Stevenson, PRCC(A) & Deputy Assistant Chaplain General (DACG). We had a very interesting meeting and spoke about Catholic chaplaincy in the Army. Bishop Paul asked me to write my story about this exciting journey from a parish priest to a chaplain.



I was born in Ukraine during the Soviet Union occupation. It was time of atheism and slavery of all Ukrainian people. My family was always very religious, despite the fact that only the Russian Orthodox Church was open at that time and Catholics were persecuted, even killed or sent to Siberia. Every day, prayers in secret were my spiritual food while growing up in my native town Ternopil.

Great changes started in Ukraine when it gained independence in 1991. The Catholic Church was free now and many people wanted to turn to God and faith. As a young boy I was accepted as an altar server. From that time, my vocation started to develop. Among many young men, I joined the Redemptorist seminary in Royal City of Lviv in Ukraine.



Soon our group of seminarians was sent to Poland to study philosophy and theology in Krakow. In 2001, I graduated with a Master's degree in Theology from the Catholic University of Saint John Paul II.





I was ordained as a Ukrainian Catholic priest in 2004. The Ukrainian Catholic Church is very wide spread, mostly in the western part of Ukraine and partly in the eastern side of the country. There were many responsibilities given to me by my Bishop, Michael Sabryha and his successor Archbishop and Metropolitan Vasyl Semeniuk. As a parish priest, I served in a small village Krasivka near Ternopil. At the same time my other mission was to serve as a chaplain in the State Mental Health Hospital for different categories of patients: mental, drug and alcohol addicts. From my present view - it was a special God's vineyard. Jesus was seen on faces of those people struggling with their hard life crosses. Not only did you share a Blessing with them, but they also gave you a great feeling of being very important in their lives.

In 2013, Hlib Lonchyna, Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Great Britain invited me to come and serve Ukrainian Catholics who lived in England. From 2013 until January 2022, I was a parish priest in Manchester and surrounding areas. Many different people from various nations such as; Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Scotland and Wales came to find God in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Many children and adults from Slovakia, Czech Republic and Lithuania received the Sacrament of Baptism in our church. They needed God and His salvation, because nothing else could calm their heart and soul. In addition, I had a great opportunity to do some voluntary work at the North Manchester hospital. A memorable day was when a nurse called me to see a patient in one of the wards of the hospital, she said a patient spoke Polish however, when I visited the patient it turned out she was from Sri Lanka, so we couldn't strike up a conversation.

Approximately four years ago Fr. Mykola Matwijiwskyj (Vicar-General of the Ukrainian Catholic eparchy in London) spoke to me about potentially becoming a chaplain of Armed Forces. Nobody is aware of God's plans but, I felt that all could be possible with hard-work, determination and prayer. Parish responsibilities, Covid-19 and post Covid situation postponed further enquiries, applications and meetings which drew me closer to become a chaplain. Everything became clearer in March 2021 when I spoke to Fr. Pascal Hanrahan who described the

complicated process of getting all formalities and commissions done. He said about 12-16 months for an application to be accepted and confirmed. Fortunately, it took me only 6 months to finish all procedures and start my new journey on the 10th January 2022. During the three weeks of Transition Course we met and spoke to so many great and dedicated padres and priests.

The eight weeks of a very intensive Short Officer's Commissioning Course provided a good taste of Army life with all the physical and mental challenges. During this course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, you can discover many hidden abilities and powers, in



particular willingness to serve as a chaplain and officer. God guided me and my good friend Rev. Paul Garnell (from the Anglican Church) through all challenges of: lack of sleep, physical and mental pressure and most of all - an opportunity to be around other officer's cadets, sharing my time, prayer, mutual experience and prayer with them.



The biggest challenge for me was on one particular day, the 24th February 2022 when Russia started an open invasion of Ukraine. We were all in the training field when my commanding instructor told me that news. Many thoughts started whirling in my mind, but I said to myself: "You can give up, especially now, when your Motherland is in fire and death". Immediately, all tiredness and exhaustion were gone and a spirit of hope took over my soul.

I also consider that time as a great opportunity to see a chaplain's work of Amy, Louis and Steven, our commanding sergeants and officers, in action. All of them shared their professional skills and experiences, enriching us in our present chaplaincy service. This profound and meaningful foundation in the Army service gave me a confirmation of the right choice and the right answer to Jesus' call. I can recall one of the chaplain's witnesses: "Be yourself and other will open their hearts to you and to God". Remembering the words of our Lord Jesus written in Gospel according to Mathew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man has not come to be served, but to serve...", we all are called to fulfill our vocation whatever it is to the best we can in the Holy Spirit.



We thank Fr. Volodymyr for sharing his story with us and pray that his family and friends in the Ukraine remain safe and well.



'3 Days That Changed The World' Quiz

1. Who said, when he met the risen Jesus, “My Lord and My God”?
2. When Jesus said, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which Psalm was he quoting from?
3. According to Matthew’s Gospel, who rolled a big stone in front of the tomb after Jesus had been laid inside?
4. Who rolled back the stone at the entrance to the tomb and sat on it?
5. When Mary Magdalene first saw the risen Jesus who did she think he was?
6. What were Jesus’s first words when he greeted his disciples on the evening of the day he rose from the dead?
7. In which of his letters does Paul say that he longs to know the power of Christ’s resurrection?
8. Who was the first disciple to enter the tomb?
9. Who was the first disciple to believe that Jesus was alive?
10. Who did the risen Jesus tell to feed his lambs?
11. On which day of the week did Jesus’s disciples discover that his tomb was empty?
12. After being resurrected, Jesus shows himself to the disciples beside which sea?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 12 will be published in Issue 13 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com

Answers to Newsletter Issue 11: 1. Donkey/Colt, 2. Arabic, 3. Simon of Cyrene, 4. Potters Field, 5. Barabbas, 6. My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me? 7. Malchus, 8. Herod & Pilate, 9. High Priest, 10. Annas, 11. Skull, 12. Joseph.

International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2022



The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 12th May 2022, returning Monday 16th May 2022.

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 Tangley Tours, Pilgrim House, Station Road, Borough Green, Kent TN15 8AF. Tel: 01732 886666

Camino de Santiago

The Camino de Santiago, known in English as the Way of St. James, is a network of pilgrims' ways or pilgrimages leading to the shrine of the apostle Saint James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain, where tradition holds that the remains of the apostle are buried.

RC Bishopric of the Forces

Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage

15 - 22 September 2022



For more information or to request an application form please contact
Padre Neil Galloway.

Neil.Galloway101@mod.gov.uk

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? Scripture gives us many examples of our Lord Jesus withdrawing from noise and bustle to pray and to gain respite (Mark 3:7, Luke 5:16). Subject to Government restrictions, there is the opportunity to find that same peace at one of the Bishopric of the Forces Retreats planned for 2022:

To express an interest or to receive an application form, contact:

rafprccpastoralassistant457@outlook.com

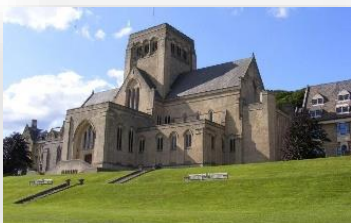
For further information see: DIN 2022DIN01-013



Douai Abbey, Berkshire 7 - 10 Jun 22



Worth Abbey, West Sussex 3 - 6 Oct 22



Ampleforth Abbey, North Yorkshire 14 - 17 Nov 22



Key Dates in April & May

Easter Sunday – 17th April

2nd Sunday of Easter – 24th April

St George, Martyr, Patron of England (*Solemnity*) –
26th April

3rd Sunday of Easter – 1st May

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

The English Martyrs (*Feast*) – 4th May

4th Sunday of Easter – 8th May

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

5th Sunday of Easter – 15th May

6th Sunday of Easter – 22nd May

The Ascension of the Lord (*Solemnity*) – 26th May

7th Sunday of Easter – 29th May

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Feast*) –
31st May

An excellent website with weekly reflections on all the upcoming Sunday readings can be found at:
<https://www.tarsus.ie/>

CATHOLIC MILITARY ASSOCIATION the official network for Defence Catholics



We exist to support Catholics in the UK Armed Forces.

We are a lay association of the faithful whose members cooperate to support Catholicism in the UK Armed Forces. We strive to inspire one-another in the Faith, to grow through prayer and the sacraments, and to offer up our sufferings, persevering together in the universal call to holiness.

We are the official Defence Catholic Association, formally approved by the Right Reverend Paul Mason, Bishop of the Forces. We are a member of the Defence Christian Network.

We are serving personnel, helping others. Find us at: <https://www.catholicmilitaryassociation.org.uk/>

Information.....

If you wish to know more about Roman Catholic matters within the Army Faith Community, please contact: **Mrs Karen Horn MBE** Pastoral Administrative Assistant (PAA) to PRCC(A) at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com