

RAF ROMAN CATHOLIC LENT 26 UPDATE

Newsletter No. 12



Welcome to the latest update for the RAF Roman Catholic Community. We are now 4 weeks into the season of Lent, the 40-day period before Easter we use to deepen our faith and to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's resurrection. I do hope that you will have the opportunity to join one of the events we have planned for the RAF RC Community this year. All are very welcome to attend; you don't have to be Roman Catholic. You can be guaranteed a warm welcome. Read further about what is planned for the rest of the year.

I would especially like to highlight a very exciting opportunity to take part in a walking pilgrimage to Assisi in this, the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi. This pilgrimage, taking place in October, will be in the company of Bishop Paul Mason, the Bishop of the Armed Forces and follows on from the successful pilgrimages we have organised to Santiago de Compostela, to Lisbon, and to Walsingham in recent years. Our annual Masses for the RAF RC Community continue to be great opportunities for fellowship and friendship. Do join us at Aldershot in April or in London in October. And if you have never attended the International Military Pilgrimage (IMP) to Lourdes then this could be your year. IMP takes place in May; further details below. Wishing you and your families every blessing this Lent and the peace of Christ throughout the year.

Rev (Wg Cdr) Dave Skillen, RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain



Walking Pilgrimage to Assisi - 10 to 17 October 2026

Assisi, in the Italian region of Umbria, has been welcoming pilgrims since the death of its most famous resident, St Francis, 800 years ago. The Bishopric of the Forces is offering the opportunity for members of the Whole Force to join with Bishop Paul for a walking pilgrimage to Assisi. We will walk 105km over 6 days on the Via di Francesco or The Way of St Francis. Starting at Terni in Umbria the route heads through stunning scenery and towns that would have been familiar to St Francis. With daily prayer and devotions, the pilgrimage will end at the shrine of St Francis in Assisi. For more information, or to register your interest, please contact jeremy.wynne109@mod.gov.uk

Annual Masses for the RAF - 2026

We hold 2 Masses each year for the RAF RC Community. The first, held at the **Military Cathedral in Aldershot, will take place on Sun 26 Apr at 1100**. The second Mass will take place at the **Central Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes, on Thu 8 Oct at 1400**. Bishop Paul Mason, RC Bishop of the Forces, presides at both Masses. These are great occasions and allow us to celebrate our common bonds of friendship. Open to all, it would be wonderful to see you there.



Bishopric of the Forces Retreats - 2026

A retreat offers the chance to step into a place of prayer and reflection. There were 3 opportunities for retreat offered in 2025. Over 30 personnel from across Defence attended one of the retreats at Douai Abbey in June; at St Beuno's Retreat Centre in Oct; and at Ampleforth Abbey in Nov. Feedback received from participants was universally positive.

A new quad-Service Team has taken over the organisation and delivery of Armed Forces retreats on behalf of the Bishopric. Plans are progressing for this year's retreat offering. A Day of Reflection is planned at The Military Cathedral, Aldershot on 23 Jun and at St Joan or Arc Church, Catterick on 25 Jun. **For further information, or to register your interest in these opportunities, please contact the Army Pastoral Administrative Assistant: armyrcpaa@gmail.com.** It is hoped that the traditional 4-day residential retreats will also be offered in 2026 with further information awaited.

On-line Faith Formation Course 2026

What do you believe?

'Journey in Faith'

Do you want to know more about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today?

SYCAMORE

Sycamore is an informal course about the Christian faith and explains the central beliefs and practices of Christianity. It gives you space to meet people and share ideas. Each session involves a short film and time for discussion. Ideal for those who are exploring the faith for the first time and for those who want to deepen the faith they already have. Sessions will be led by RAF Chaplains, Padres Ashley Mitchell and Dave Skillen.

Everyone is welcome

Come along and join us online

We will meet for 7 sessions on MSTeams
Mondays 8.00pm-9.15pm

26 Jan, 23 Feb, 23 Mar, 20 Apr, 18 May, 22 Jun and 13 Jul 2026

For further information, and to register your interest, please contact
Ashley.mitchell258@mod.gov.uk

Chrism Mass 2026

The annual Mass of Chrism will be celebrated at the military Cathedral of SS Michael & George at 1200 on Wed 18 March. Join with Bishop Paul and military chaplains as they renew their priestly vows. All very welcome to attend.

International Military Pilgrimage (IMP) to Lourdes 21 - 25 May 2026

The link to the Booking Form for IMP 2026 is contained within the DIN which is now released. You would be very welcome to attend the IMP as part of the UK contingent. RAF service personnel and MOD civil servants attached to the RAF are able to receive a very generous subsidy towards the cost of attending.

2026DIN01-022 66th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes refers.

Personnel may obtain details from their military chaplain or from the Pilgrimage Organiser, Fr Nick Gosnell: stmichael.stgeorge@live.co.uk.

And finally...

If you would like to know more about or take part in any of the events mentioned in this newsletter, or about Catholic life in the RAF, or should you wish to be added to our database and receive future updates, get in touch with Wg Cdr (Rtd) Deacon Jem Wynne, Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the RAF PRCC. Contact the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain, Padre Dave Skillen, to say hello, request prayers, or to know more about Catholic life in the RAF.

Wg Cdr (Rtd) Deacon Jem Wynne Jeremy.wynne109@mod.gov.uk

Rev(Wg Cdr) Dave Skillen David.skillen100@mod.gov.uk

Check out the Bishopric of the Forces Website for the latest news and information.

