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"We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope." Martin Luther King, Jnr.



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

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



Welcome to Issue 39 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As we transition from the warmth of summer into the cooler months of autumn and winter, we hope this season has provided you with time for rest, reflection, and renewal. Whether you spent it with family, in quiet contemplation, or on well-earned leave, may it have brought a sense of peace and fresh energy for the months ahead. This time of year, often invites us to refocus, reconnect, and prepare for what lies ahead, both in service and in spirit. In these days of uncertainty and unpredictability across the world, we continue to pray for peace: in our hearts, in our communities, and especially in the places torn by conflict. As St. Paul reminds us: *"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."* (Romans 12:12). Let us hold fast to that hope as we journey forward together.

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



At the 1100 hrs. Mass on Sunday, 22nd June, Fr. Nick Gosnell joyfully celebrated the sacrament of First Holy Communion with a group of young people: Wyatt, Jasmine, Desmond, Anthony, Sophie, Aldred, Adrian, Ashley, Elsie, Oliver, Warwick, Phoebe, Adam, Florence, Maria, and Noah. We ask you to keep these children in your prayers as they continue to grow in faith and deepen their relationship with Christ through the Eucharist.



A day of recollection at the Hill of crosses

Written by Fr. Terkura Igbe



The name, "Hill of Crosses" call for some sort of curiosity in the mind of a good number of people. For some people, this may sound very common depending on their faith orientation. The cross is not strange to most Christians if not all. Beyond the fact that criminals were executed on the cross, Jesus, the Son of God died on the cross to save fallen humanity.

Prior to my deployment in March 2025, I had never heard of the "Hill of Crosses." During my handover takeover (HOTO) with Padre Homfray-Cooper, he made mention of the "Hill of Crosses." At that time, this seemed very clumsy but much later in the tour, I stumbled on a tour guidebook of the Baltic States. As I scanned through the pages, I came across the "Hill of Crosses." I got totally seduced by it as I read the brief history of "Hill of Crosses."

The Baltic States have a common history of multiple occupation from foreign nations, and especially from the Russian Empire. These occupations were periods of uncertainties for people in these States. Citizens' freedoms such as freedom of religion, speech, assembly, and political participation were totally suppressed.

Lithuania like the other Baltic States suffered under Russian occupation for many decades. During this time of uncertainties, Lithuanians, inspired by Christian faith found consolation in the power of the cross. This became a symbol of resistance from the dictates of the Soviet occupation. The cross was also a symbol of hope for Lithuanians under the Soviet oppression.

Around the world, people travel for various reasons such as family engagements, work, leisure, just to mention a few. I decided to take time away from Tapa camp for a day of recollection at the "Hill of Crosses" in Lithuania. I travelled by train from Vilnius to Šiauliai, in northern Lithuania. The journey by train is between two and two and a half hours. Economy class was like a cubicle with a sitting capacity of six. This was a completely different experience from the UK standard. I had quite a fun time interacting with passengers sharing the same cubicle as I. The passengers were so friendly but sadly, I had to leave them at Šiauliai.





The site (Hill of Crosses) is approximately 7.5 miles north of the city of Šiauliai.

The day of recollection went so well. I found it to be a place of calm and spirituality. As I moved around the hill, I saw different sizes and shapes of crosses. I saw very old ones as well as new ones. All the crosses were different and the expressions unique. I believe that each cross planted on the hill conveyed a deep message and told the story of an individual or many individuals. Apart from the mosquitoes and horse flies, my time of recollection went well. I offered personal prayers and prayers for others. I had time for quiet reflection on my first deployment as an Army chaplain and thanked God for the privilege to serve the Army people and their families.

Added to the satisfaction of serving as the Chaplain for the entire Battle Group - CABRIT 16, my experience at the "Hill of Crosses" was a dream come true. The cross certainly continues to be a symbol of hope to humanity and Easter only makes sense because of Jesus's triumph on the cross. Lithuania has deep Christian roots and Lithuanians are not shy of practicing their Christian faith.



Signs of contradiction – Beatification Mass of Archbishop Eduard Profittlich

Written by Fr. Terkura Igbe

The church continues to be a voice in our world – constantly challenging oppressive structures. The church is far from being a perfect institution, even though the true Church Jesus remains ever perfect. In the midst of imperfections in the church, many faithful continue to be true witnesses of the Gospel by what they say and do.

The grace of God abounds down through the ages and his benevolence and might can be seen in the events in the church and the world at large. September is one of the special months in the church's calendar. Every year the church celebrates the feast of The Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 8th September. This year, the feast was preceded by two remarkable events of great spiritual and Christian witnessing.

Firstly, Archbishop Eduard Profittlich was beatified in Tallinn, Estonia on Saturday 6th September. Secondly, Carlo Acutis was canonised in Rome on Sunday 7th September. His life remains a powerful example for all people, especially teenagers.



When I deployed in March, little did I know I would be part of a history making event in Estonia. One of the good things I did apart from shepherding Service Personnel across the Battle Group in Tapa was to get in touch with the Bishop of Tallinn, Philippe Jourdan. He is the Catholic Bishop of Tallinn. This became a great opening to knowing and being part of church life in Estonia. It was with joy that I received an invitation from the Bishop for the beatification of his predecessor, Archbishop Eduard Profittlich. The CO, Col Grant Brown and the entire Battle Group in Tapa were also invited.

Archbishop Eduard's beatification was scheduled for 17th May 2025 but was postponed because of the death of Pope Francis in April. Archbishop Eduard Profittlich, SJ, was born in Birresdorf, Germany. He studied as a Jesuit in Poland and served as Apostolic Administrator to Estonia from 1931 until 1942. Soviet Union authorities arrested him a year after invading Estonia. He was deported to a prison in Siberia and sentenced to death. He died from exposure in Kirov prison on February 22, 1942, before his sentence could be carried out.



After the Soviet invasion of Estonia, Archbishop Profittlich had the opportunity to return to Germany to escape probable imprisonment but wrote to Pope Pius XII asking for his guidance. The Pope responded that Archbishop Profittlich should do whatever he thought would help the Estonian Catholic Church the most, confirming Profittlich's decision to stay and help the Church in Estonia no matter the consequences. What a heroic act done, not out of self-glorification but all done for the sake of the Gospel. **"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).**

One would not be wrong to say that some of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching such as the dignity of the human person, the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, human rights and peace were close to the heart of Archbishop Profittlich.

Bishop Jourdan said, "He decided to really share the tragic destiny of tens of thousands of Estonians who were deported and died in the concentration camps of the Soviet Union,". "We could say that he was an Estonian not because of the blood he received but because of the blood he gave."

The example of Archbishop Eduard Profittlich challenges us to stand up for what is right, and to be courageous in times of adversity. In our work or vocation, we do not actively go out in search of martyrdom, but we can prepare ourselves, with an open mind and be ready at all time to pick up our cross and follow Jesus. Above all, we all can respond to the call to be signs of contradiction in our world today. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, OP, Archbishop Emeritus of Vienna, presided over the mass. It was a beautiful day, lovely sunshine and maybe too hot for some people!



Catholic Military Association



The Catholic Military Association recently travelled to Carfin Grotto, near Motherwell in Scotland. One of its members has kindly written the following article for our newsletter.

Faith, Fellowship, and Father Doyle: A Pilgrimage to Carfin

In July, members of the Catholic Military Association (CMA) gathered at Carfin Grotto, Scotland's National Shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes, for a deeply moving pilgrimage that brought together faith, fellowship, and a renewed sense of mission. The day was filled with prayer, reflection, and a powerful sense of unity between regulars, reservists (as I am, with 71 Engineer Regiment) and veterans. Dr. Pat Kenny from the Father Willie Doyle Association gave a stirring talk about Fr. Willie Doyle SJ, a heroic World War I chaplain whose deep spirituality, humour, and self-sacrifice still inspire today. Fr. Willie ministered to soldiers in the trenches, risking his life to bring the sacraments to the dying. His legacy is one of courage, humility, and unwavering love for Christ.

Dr. Pat also brought Fr. Willie's own crucifix. Its presence drew us into the mystery of Christ's suffering and the priestly heart of Fr. Willie, who lived and died in imitation of his Saviour. It was a grace that touched us deeply.



A memorable point is Fr. Willie's personal struggle with self-discipline, including little abstentions from butter. This seemingly small battle was part of a greater spiritual training that prepared him for the ultimate sacrifice. St. Josemaría Escrivá reflects on this in *The Way*:

"We were reading — you and I — the heroically ordinary life of that man of God. And we saw him fight whole months and years (what 'accounts' he kept in his particular examination!) at breakfast time: today he won, tomorrow he was beaten... He noted: 'Didn't take butter...; did take butter!' May you and I too live our 'butter tragedy'."

This quote struck us deeply, reminding us that holiness begins in the small, hidden battles of daily life, and that little disciplines prepare us for the great challenges of war.

In many ways, the CMA mirrors the mission of Fr. Willie. It invites its members to the foot of the Cross—through prayer, fellowship, and sacramental life—and directs them to the healing graces of sacraments and sacramentals. Whether through pilgrimages, rosaries, or simply chatting together in faith, the CMA helps us to hear Christ in the midst of military life and beyond.

Fr. Willie is currently a Servant of God, and his cause is actively supported by the CMA. His life speaks powerfully to military people, proving that sanctity is possible even in the most brutal and chaotic circumstances. This pilgrimage marked the beginning of an exciting initiative: the CMA, in collaboration with the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow and the Father Willie Doyle Association, is fundraising for the first public portrait of Fr. Willie Doyle. The portrait will be painted by renowned Scottish artist Ewan McClure and will be displayed at Carfin Grotto as a lasting tribute to visitors from around the world.

Donations are warmly welcomed to help cover the cost of this historic artwork. Supporting this project is a way to honour Fr. Willie's legacy and bring his witness to new generations.

As we gathered at Carfin, surrounded by the beauty of the Grotto and the warmth of our community, I was struck by the power of fellowship rooted in faith. The CMA has given me more than I ever expected: a deeper relationship with God, clarity of purpose, and a spiritual family that walks with me on my journey. Through its support I've grown closer to Christ, and it has played a pivotal role in leading me to marriage with my fiancée of 21 years this September. After many years together, it was through this fellowship that our family life has been redirected toward God, and we have found the courage and clarity to marry. Even more beautifully, since I joined the CMA, my fiancée has embraced the Catholic faith and will enter the Church. We will be married at Carfin Grotto, the very place where this journey of grace has deepened for both of us. Please pray for us.

VIVA CRISTO REY.

Sapper Bunce.

124 field support SQN

71 Engineer Regiment



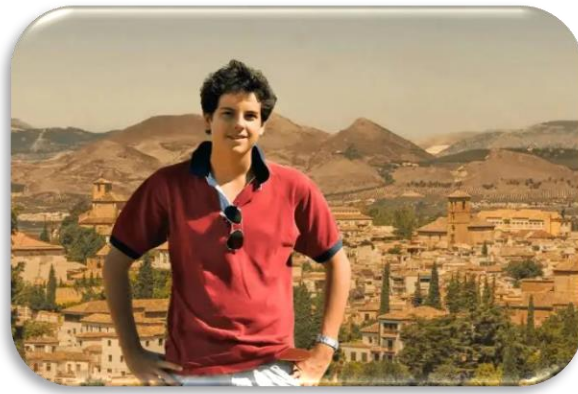
Learn more and get involved:

Catholic Military Association: <https://www.catholicmilitaryassociation.org.uk/>

Carfin Grotto: <https://www.carfingrotto.org/>

Father Willie Doyle Association: <https://williedoyle.org/>

Ignatian Spirituality Centre, Glasgow: <https://www.iscglasgow.co.uk/>



Saint Carlo Acutís (3 May 1991 – 12 October 2006)

On Sunday, 7th September 2025, an historic moment unfolded in St. Peter's Square as Carlo Acutis, a London-born teenager, was canonised by Pope Leo, becoming the first millennial saint. The Mass, attended by an estimated 80,000 people, marked a deeply emotional and significant day for the Catholic Church—and especially for Carlo's family, who were present for the ceremony.

His mother, Antonia Salzano, has travelled the world speaking to Catholic communities about her son's remarkable life and faith. She attended the canonisation with her family, including Carlo's two teenage siblings, both born after his death. His younger brother, Michele, took part in the service by delivering a reading.

Carlo Acutis died in 2006 at the age of 15, following a brief battle with leukaemia. In his short life, he gained attention for his deep faith and early embrace of technology. He created websites that documented Eucharistic miracles, aiming to share Catholic teachings with the world. His passion and digital outreach earned him nicknames such as "God's Influencer" and "The Cyber Apostle."

Originally scheduled for canonisation in April, the event was postponed due to the death of Pope Francis, who had beatified Carlo in 2020, recognising the first step toward sainthood. Pope Francis also formally credited Carlo with two miracles, required for canonisation.

The first miracle involved the healing of a young boy in Brazil suffering from a rare congenital pancreatic disease. The second occurred in Florence, where a student suffering severe brain trauma from a head injury recovered after his mother prayed at Carlo's tomb in Assisi, Italy. Since Carlo's death, stories of healing and answered prayers have multiplied, with many believing he intercedes from heaven.

Pilgrims have flocked in increasing numbers to Assisi, where Carlo's body lies in repose, preserved in wax and displayed in a glass tomb. Over a million people are estimated to have visited the site. Another growing pilgrimage destination is Our Lady of Dolours Church in London, where Carlo was baptised. Since the announcement of his sainthood, the church has seen a marked increase in visitors.

The devotion surrounding Carlo began almost immediately after his death. His funeral drew many whose lives he had touched—immigrants, bullied children, and others he quietly supported. His mother

recalls that it was shortly after his funeral that people began reporting miraculous healings, attributed to his intercession.

Carlo's canonisation stands out not only for its emotional resonance but also for its speed. The Catholic Church typically takes decades, sometimes centuries, to canonise a saint, following rigorous investigation into the candidate's life and alleged miracles. In Carlo's case, the process moved swiftly, conceivably, a sign of the Church's desire to connect with younger generations, highlighting a modern model of sainthood rooted in digital evangelisation, compassion, and unwavering faith.

Now officially a saint, St. Carlo Acutis offers a powerful example of how holiness can thrive in contemporary life, even among the youngest of believers.

Further information about St. Carlos can be found at: <https://www.carloacutis.com/en/association> and <https://carloacutis-en.org/>



So, what does it take to be declared a Saint? Here is a quick reminder of 'What is a Saint' and the process towards 'Sainthood'.

What is a Saint?

For Catholics, a saint is someone who has lived a life of exceptional holiness and whose soul is believed to be in heaven. Saints are recognised for demonstrating "heroic virtue in the service of Christ" and serve as powerful examples of faith. Once officially recognised by the Church, a saint is honoured with a feast day and may be venerated by Christians around the world.

Pope Paul VI once encouraged the faithful with the reminder that "holiness is within everyone's reach." According to him, becoming a saint requires only two essential things: "the grace of God and our own good will".

Still, the official process by which the Church recognises someone as a saint, known as canonisation, is a careful, lengthy, and often complex journey.

Becoming a Saint: The Church's Process.

A widespread recognition of their holy life

The path to sainthood begins not in official documents, but in the hearts and voices of ordinary people. The first step is the growing conviction among the faithful that someone lived a life of integrity and Christian virtue. Alternatively, the process may begin if the person gave their life as a martyr for the faith.

The Servant of God

Next, the diocesan bishop begins a formal investigation into the person's life, virtues, and writings. All gathered evidence is then submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. If the case is accepted, the individual is given their first official title: **Servant of God**.

Venerable

A deeper investigation then takes place to establish "moral certainty" that the person either lived a life of heroic Christian virtue or died as a true martyr. If this is confirmed, the Pope grants the second title: **Venerable**.

Beatification

The next stage is **beatification**, during which the person is declared "**Blessed**." There are two paths to this step:

- **For martyrs**, no miracle is required. Their sacrifice is considered a direct witness to the faith.
- **For others**, a verified miracle attributed to the person's intercession must be confirmed, as a sign of God's approval.

The Final Miracle

To be declared a saint, a martyr must have one miracle attributed to their intercession after beatification. All other candidates require two such miracles—one for beatification and another for canonisation.

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.

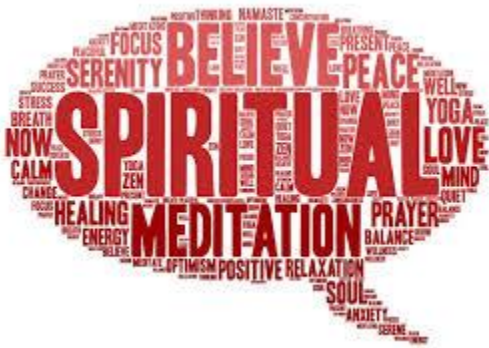
The aim is to have a closer relationship with God through prayer and how we live each day.

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 for more details if this is something you would like to explore.



Miraculous Events

1. Who was struck blind on the road to Damascus as he sought to persecute Christians?
2. Who did Paul strike blind as a punishment?
3. How many of Jesus' recorded miracles took place on the Sabbath?
4. In the Old Testament who was told that the Lord would take away all the sickness from them?
5. When the Israelites were fleeing from the Egyptians, what happened when Moses raised his staff and stretched his hand over the sea?
6. True or False? The word 'miracle' never occurs in the New Testament outside the four Gospels.
7. Who saw a bush on fire that did not burn?
8. How long had Lazarus been dead when Jesus raised him to life?
9. When did the Sun and Moon stand still?
10. True or False? Elijah went up to heaven in a chariot of fire.
11. Who wrote that the apostles did many wonder and miraculous signs?
12. When Philip the deacon cast out evil spirits what noise was heard?
13. Which of Jesus' half brothers experienced a resurrection appearance of the risen Lord Jesus Christ?
14. Who did the angel of the Lord tell to go to the desert road that links Gaza and Jerusalem?
15. As they had no boats, how were the Israelites able to cross the river, Jordan?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 39 will be published in Issue 40 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com Answers to Newsletter Issue 38: 1. 66 Catholic 73, 2. 39 Catholic 46, 3. 27, 4. About 1600 yrs, 5. Psalms, 6. II John, 7. Ruth, 8. Psalms, 9. Numbers, 10. Exodus, 11. Ester, Song of Solomon, 12. Job, 13. Exodus 20, 14. Matthew 6 & Luke 11, 15. Matthew 5, 16. The Sermon on the mount, 17. Matthew, Mark, Luke & John, Good news, 18. Luke, 19. Acts, 20. Proverbs.

66th International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2026



The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 21st May 2025, returning Monday 25th May 2026.

Serving personnel may obtain details from their Military Chaplain or from the Pilgrimage Organiser: **Father Nick Gosnell**, Cathedral of St. Michael and St. George, Queens Avenue, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2BY. Tel: **01252 315042**

The Travel agents are Tangney Tours, Pilgrim House, Station Road, Borough Green, Kent TN15 8AF. Tel: 01732 886666

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? 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, St. Beuno's Centre in North Wales, and Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire.



ST. BEUNO'S CENTRE 13 - 16 OCT 25

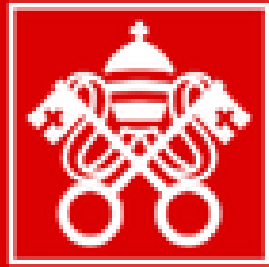


AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 10 - 13 Nov 25

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 make 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 Leo, the Holy See, the Church in the world, and international news.

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



Online with Saints App



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

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

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

Discover much more information about the saints:

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

Access videos

Turn on the subtitles in YouTube

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

Catholic Military App is Live!



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

- ❖ It offers:
- ❖ Strong Catholic prayers, all downloaded so they can be accessed easily whilst on ship/ops/ex etc.
- ❖ Answers to 200+ questions about faith and the military.
- ❖ Prayers specifically for the military.
- ❖ Testimonies from serving Catholics.
- ❖ Inspiring military Saints and quotes.
- ❖ Guidance for preparing for Mass and Confession.
- ❖ Spiritual first aid.
- ❖ Contact details for the Military Chaplain and Association of whichever country the user is in.
- ❖ The facility to upload spiritual reading.

The CMC app is currently available in both the [Google Play](#) and [App stores](#), for smartphones and tablets, in 8 languages (English, Italian, French, Spanish, Croatian, German, Portuguese and Dutch). This is an excellent resource for your spiritual armoury.



The Holy See endorses CMC App

The Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Parolin, sent a message for the launch of the CMC App to the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. In his words: "I believe that the app will be immensely helpful to all military personnel, and in a particular way to young men and women who, in this important sector of civil service, seek to grow in personal friendship with Jesus Christ." See the video.



Key Dates in Sep & Oct

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Feast) – 8th September

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
(Feast) – 14th September

Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels
(Feast) – 29th September

St Francis of Assisi
(Memorial) – 4th October

Our Lady of the Rosary
(Memorial) – 7th October

St Luke, Evangelist (Feast) – 18th October

Ss Simon and Jude, Apostles
(Feast) – 28th October

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