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"Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, man cannot live without a spiritual life" Buddha



ARMY

Army Roman Catholic Newsletter

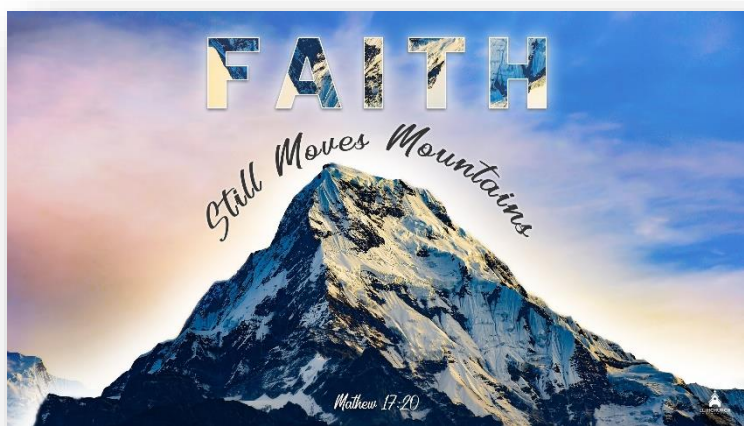


Welcome

From

The Revd. Fr. Ian Stevenson CF

Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (Army)



Welcome to Issue 27 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As we enter the sacred season of Lent, a time of reflection, repentance and renewal, we are called to embark on a profound journey of spiritual introspection. This season provides us with a unique opportunity to draw closer to God, to deepen our faith and rekindle the flame of love and compassion within us. May this season be a source of inspiration and a catalyst for positive change in our lives.

Lent Offers Opportunities for Repentance and Renewal

"Grow as a disciple of Jesus"



As we approach Lent, we start to think of planning how we are going to tackle our journey over the next few weeks, developing that closer relationship with God by way of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We recently came across an article written by a Sister in the USA which we hope you will find encouraging.

Lent is a time of conversion, a time to return to the Lord in whatever ways you have turned against him: in your attitudes, your conversations, your plans, your goals, even in your hopes and dreams.

"Yet even now", says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; and rend your hearts, not your garments. Return to the Lord, your God for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...." - Joel 2:12-13.

Are you in any way choosing to do what you want, rather than what the Lord wants? Examine your conscience based on the areas I just listed.

Going to confession during Lent is important and you should take advantage more than once if you can. However, Lent is much more than facing sin. That's just the first step. God has so much of his life to share with you. We want to hate sin as God does because God knows that sin impedes his presence and his action in our lives. By sin we say no to God! Let's get rid of it as soon as , and as often as, we recognise it.



The second suggestion is to pray the Stations of the Cross as often as you can during the six weeks of Lent. When someone we love has gone through a horrible

experience, we want them to share it with us that we might, in a certain way, comfort and support them. When we make the Stations of the Cross, we accompany Jesus on his torturous journey to Calvary - step by major step. As we accompany him in our walk, station by station, the path that he walked, we begin to see more clearly what he has done for us, and we are drawn to give him comfort. The greatest comfort we can give him is repentance for our sins - clearing out our lives from those sins that brought Christ to Calvary in the first place.



The stations can be prayed privately, as well as with parishioners during a Lenten service. But they can often be prayed alone in the church - any hour that the church is open and Mass is not being celebrated. Most parishes will have prayer books or booklets available to accompany your "journey" around the church - step by step with Jesus. Ponder each one for a few moments. Then pray: one Our Father, one Hail Mary, one Glory be ... (Other prayers may be available through parish prayer booklets.)

Three other areas that you might want to explore during Lent: Learn to grow in thanksgiving to God by daily thanking him for all the blessings that have come to you. We are such a self-focused people that we center our thoughts much more on what we don't have than on what we do. Such ingratitude blocks us spiritually and we can miss the graces God is pouring down upon us because we want or think we need something else. Look at what God has given you, done for you. Thank him - daily!

Third, in the area of fasting: How about doing this for Lent? Fast from selfish thoughts and acts. Fast from jealousy and envy. Fast from greed. Fast from negative speech.

The verse from the prophet Joel, quoted at the beginning of this article asks us to rend our hearts, not our garments. In other words, let our sacrifices during Lent be simple and quiet and unobtrusive. Don't let the world know what you are giving up and God, who sees all, will reward.

Finally, as you walk through Lent, love others with the love you receive from God. Sit at the fountain of life and drink deeply and then you will have much to give!



Sister Ann Shields is a member of the Servants of God's Love

Shrove Tuesday

(13th February 2024)



The day preceding Ash Wednesday is traditionally known as 'Shrove Tuesday' although it is frequently referred to as 'Pancake Tuesday' or 'Mardi Gras' (Fat Tuesday). However, it is the name Shrove that reveals its religious origins. Shrove is the past tense of the English verb 'Shrive' which means; to hear the confession of, assign penance to, and absolve.

With Shrove Tuesday taking place the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, it was the day when Christians were encouraged to go to confession in preparation for the penitential season of 40 days and nights, ending with Easter Sunday.



Dating back to 1000AD, Shrove Tuesday was not just a day for confession but, a time for Catholics to eat eggs, sugar and dairy which, by tradition were restricted during the Lenten fast. It also made sense to use them up before the fast began.

In Britain, the feast of these foods would become pancakes, hence the name Pancake Tuesday. In the Middle Ages, the idea of Pancake Tuesday to celebrate the eve of the Lenten Fast gathered momentum and traditions such as pancake races and pancake tossing became practices that can be found in villages and towns today.



Countries all over the world celebrate 'Shrove Tuesday' with variations on the pancake. But, while Shrove Tuesday remains a significant day of observance for Catholics and other Christians in preparing for Lent, 'Mardi Gras' festivals seemed to have become a secular melee that has little to do with the Christian faith.

Ash Wednesday

(14th February 2024)



As we know, Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Lent is the forty days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Easter. The number forty referring to the forty days Jesus spent in the desert prior to beginning his ministry of teaching. On Ash Wednesday, Catholics and some other Christian denominations receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their forehead or sprinkled on top of their head. These ashes are created from the palms used during the previous year's Palm Sunday Mass. They symbolize penance, which is appropriate as Lent is a season of penance, and remind us of our own mortality. During the Mass, as the priest or lay minister applies the ashes, he says "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." Anyone who attends a Mass can receive ashes, not just practicing Catholics.

Ashes have a place of prominence throughout the Old Testament. They are an outward sign of an internal state of penance or mourning which we can find in some scriptural references:

"Therefore I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes." - Job 42: 6

"Daughter of my people, dress in sackcloth, roll in the ashes." - Jeremiah 6:26

"I turned to the Lord God, to seek help, in prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." - Daniel 9:3

"When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh: "By decree of the king and his nobles, no man or beast, no cattle or sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. Man and beast alike must be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; they all must turn from their evil way and from the violence of their hands." - Jonah 3: 6-8

And the practice continued after the coming of Jesus. The practice of public penance was common in the Early Church. After making a confession a person would receive ashes on his head from the priest. The practice of using ashes to mark the beginning of Lent is first recorded during the time of St. Gregory the Great. The Gregorian Sacramentary has the earliest known record of it, then called the "Day of Ashes." Pope Urban II recommended the practice be used universally throughout the Church in 1091.

Reference: <https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/lent/ash-wednesday.html>



MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2024

Through the Desert God Leads us to Freedom

Dear brothers and sisters!

When our God reveals himself, his message is always one of freedom: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (*Ex 20:2*). These are the first words of the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Those who heard them were quite familiar with the exodus of which God spoke: the experience of their bondage still weighed heavily upon them. In the desert, they received the "Ten Words" as a thoroughfare to freedom. We call them "commandments", in order to emphasize the strength of the love by which God shapes his people. The call to freedom is a demanding one. It is not answered straightaway; it has to mature as part of a journey. Just as Israel in the desert still clung to Egypt – often longing for the past and grumbling against the Lord and Moses – today too, God's people can cling to an oppressive bondage that it is called to leave behind. We realize how true this is at those moments when we feel hopeless, wandering through life like a desert and lacking a promised land as our destination. Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more – in the words of the prophet Hosea – the place of our first love (cf. *Hos 2:16-17*). *God shapes his people, he enables us to leave our slavery behind* and experience a Passover from death to life. Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.

The exodus from slavery to freedom is no abstract journey. If our celebration of Lent is to be concrete, the first step is to desire to *open our eyes to reality*. When the Lord calls out to Moses from the burning bush, he immediately shows that he is a God who sees and, above all, hears: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (*Ex 3:7-8*). Today too, the cry of so many of our oppressed brothers and sisters rises to heaven. Let us ask ourselves: Do we hear that cry? Does it trouble us? Does it move us? All too many things keep us apart from each other, denying the fraternity that, from the beginning, binds us to one another.

During my visit to Lampedusa, as a way of countering the globalization of indifference, I asked two questions, which have become more and more pressing: "Where are you?" (*Gen 3:9*) and "Where is your brother?" (*Gen 4:9*). Our Lenten journey will be concrete if, by listening once more to those two questions, we realize that even today we remain under the rule of Pharaoh. A rule that makes us weary and indifferent. A model of growth that divides and robs us of a future. Earth, air and water are polluted, but so are our souls. True, Baptism has begun our process of liberation, yet there remains in us an inexplicable longing for slavery. A kind of attraction to the security of familiar things, to the detriment of our freedom.

In the Exodus account, there is a significant detail: it is God who sees, is moved and brings freedom; Israel does not ask for this. Pharaoh stifles dreams, blocks the view of heaven, makes it appear that this world, in which human dignity is trampled upon and authentic bonds are denied, can never change. He put everything in bondage to himself. Let us ask: Do I want a new world? Am I ready to leave behind my compromises with the old? The witness of many of my brother bishops and a great number of those who work for peace and justice has increasingly convinced me that we need to combat a deficit of hope that stifles dreams and the silent cry that reaches to heaven and moves the

heart of God. This “deficit of hope” is not unlike the nostalgia for slavery that paralyzed Israel in the desert and prevented it from moving forward. An exodus can be interrupted: how else can we explain the fact that humanity has arrived at the threshold of universal fraternity and at levels of scientific, technical, cultural, and juridical development capable of guaranteeing dignity to all, yet gropes about in the darkness of inequality and conflict.

God has not grown weary of us. Let us welcome Lent as the great season in which he reminds us: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (*Ex* 20:2). Lent is *a season of conversion, a time of freedom*. Jesus himself, as we recall each year on the first Sunday of Lent, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us: the incarnate Son. Unlike Pharaoh, God does not want subjects, but sons and daughters. The desert is the place where our freedom can mature in a personal decision not to fall back into slavery. In Lent, we find new criteria of justice and a community with which we can press forward on a road not yet taken.

This, however, entails *a struggle*, as the book of Exodus and the temptations of Jesus in the desert make clear to us. The voice of God, who says, “You are my Son, the Beloved” (*Mk* 1:11), and “You shall have no other gods before me” (*Ex* 20:3) is opposed by the enemy and his lies. Even more to be feared than Pharaoh are the idols that we set up for ourselves; we can consider them as his voice speaking within us. To be all-powerful, to be looked up to by all, to domineer over others: every human being is aware of how deeply seductive that lie can be. It is a road well-travelled. We can become attached to money, to certain projects, ideas or goals, to our position, to a tradition, even to certain individuals. Instead of making us move forward, they paralyze us. Instead of encounter, they create conflict. Yet there is also a new humanity, a people of the little ones and of the humble who have not yielded to the allure of the lie. Whereas those who serve idols become like them, mute, blind, deaf and immobile (cf. *Ps* 114:4), the poor of spirit are open and ready: a silent force of good that heals and sustains the world.

It is time to act, and in Lent, *to act also means to pause*. To pause *in prayer*, in order to receive the word of God, to pause like the Samaritan *in the presence of a wounded brother or sister*. Love of God and love of neighbour are one love. Not to have other gods is to pause in the presence of God beside the flesh of our neighbour. For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us. Then the atrophied and isolated heart will revive. Slow down, then, and pause! The contemplative dimension of life that Lent helps us to rediscover will release new energies. In the presence of God, we become brothers and sisters, more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travelers. This is God’s dream, the promised land to which we journey once we have left our slavery behind.

The Church’s synodal form, which in these years we are rediscovering and cultivating, suggests that Lent is also *a time of communitarian decisions*, of decisions, small and large, that are countercurrent. Decisions capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighbourhoods, such as the ways we acquire goods, care for creation, and strive to include those who go unseen or are looked down upon. I invite every Christian community to do just this: to offer its members moments set aside to rethink their lifestyles, times to examine their presence in society and the contribution they make to its betterment. Woe to us if our Christian penance were to resemble the kind of penance that so dismayed Jesus. To us too, he says: “Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting” (*Mt* 6:16). Instead, let others see joyful faces, catch the scent of freedom and experience the love that makes all things new, beginning with the smallest and those nearest to us. This can happen in every one of our Christian communities.

To the extent that this Lent becomes a time of conversion, an anxious humanity will notice a burst of creativity, a flash of new hope. Allow me to repeat what I told the young people whom I met in Lisbon last summer: “Keep seeking and be ready to take risks. At this moment in time, we face enormous risks; we hear the painful plea of so many people. Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet let us find the courage to see our world, not as being in its death throes but in a process of giving birth, not at the end but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history. We need courage to think like this” (*Address to University Students*, 3 August 2023). Such is the courage of conversion, born of coming up from slavery. For faith and charity take hope, this small child, by the hand. They teach her to walk, and at the same time, she leads them forward. [1] I bless all of you and your Lenten journey.

Cathedral of St Michael and St George Aldershot



The 3rd Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete Sunday*, indeed was a time to 'rejoice' as the Bishop of the Forces, Bishop Paul Mason, received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church, Alison (Columba), Malcolm (Ambrose) and Ulric (Michael), and conferred the sacrament of Confirmation on them together with Angela (Philomena), Imogen (Anastasia), Jacob (Patrick), Michael (Edmund) and Troy (Maximillian). Please continue to pray for them all on their journey of faith.





St Edward the Confessor Church Pirbright



Sunday, 28th January, saw the Bishop of the Forces, Bishop Paul Mason, confer the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation for 3 Army recruits at St Edward's church.



Joshua and Callum (to the left of Bishop Paul) received the Sacrament of Confirmation and Callum (to the right) received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Please hold them in your prayers as they continue their journey of faith.

The 3 recruits will be joining the Royal Engineers, Royal Logistic Corps and Household Cavalry Regiment once they have completed their training.

Army Training Centre (ATC) Pirbright



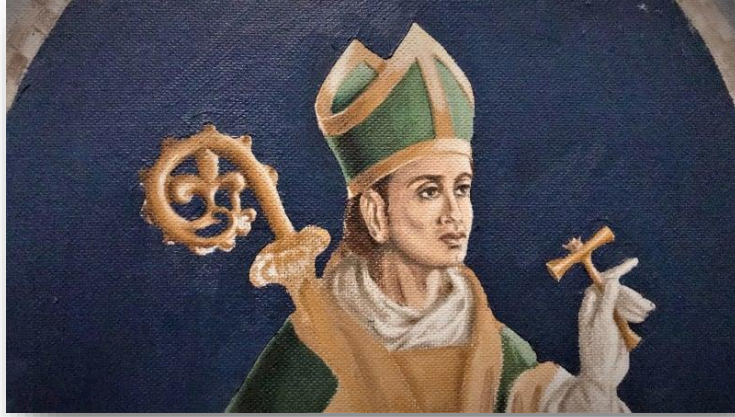
The Army Training Centre (ATC) Pirbright is located about 30 miles West of London, close to the towns of Aldershot and Guildford. The centre delivers the 14 week training course known as the Common Military Syllabus which is complete by all adult recruits (age 17+) when they join the Army. The course is designed to develop the individual and team skills in a progressive manner, preparing recruits for their Initial Trade Training, where they learn the specific skills for their chosen Army trade.

ATC Pirbright delivers Phase 1 Training for new recruits joining: Army Air Corps, Army Medical Services, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Corps of Royal Engineers, Corps of Army Music, Royal Armoured Corps, Royal Regiment of Artillery, Royal Corps of Signals, Royal Logistic Corps, Adjutant General's Corps and Intelligence Corps.

Those recruits attending ATC Pirbright will be taught and trained on a variety of military aspects.

- Fieldcraft
- Skill at Arms
- Fitness Training
- Qualities of a soldier
- Military Knowledge
- Battlefield casualty drills
- Individual health
- Education

Ministry in Motion



Fr Volodymyr "Vlod" Sampara is the Chaplain with 2nd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment (known as "The Poachers") at Kendrew Barracks, Cottesmore, Rutland. Also based at Kendrew Barracks is a REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) detachment. The 1st December is St Eligus Day, the Patron Saint of the REME Corps. Fr Vlod was asked by the REME detachment whether he would celebrate St Eligus Day with them. This is his report of the event.



I received a message and invitation from our REME LAD OC Captain Swaffield about the possibility of celebrating St. Eligius Day with the REME team. Everything was arranged for the celebration to take place on the 1st Dec 2023 in the REME offices. That was the first time I was to celebrate this special day with our REME soldiers. In preparation for this service, I did some research about this Saint who is their Corps Patron. It is worthy to share an excerpt of his life with you:



"Saint Eligius was born the son of an artisan, at Chaptelat near Limoges, France around AD588. Showing remarkable talent for engraving and smithing, he undertook an apprenticeship to become a goldsmith. Upon completion of his training he became known to King Clotaire in Paris. The King gave Eligius orders to make him a throne, and with the materials furnished he made two instead of one. Clotaire was so impressed he made him Master of the Mint, and coins are still to be found with his name upon them. King Dagobert shared his father's trust in Eligius and gave the Saint the estate of Solignac in Limousin for the foundation of a monastery, which in AD632 was occupied by monks following the combined orders of Saint Columba and Saint Benedict. He also gave Eligius a house in Paris, which he converted into a nunnery under Saint Aurea.

Eligius was eventually chosen to be Bishop of Noyon and Tournai. He took a leading part in the ecclesiastical life of his day and for the whole of his life practised his craft.

Saint Eligius (known as Saint Eloi in France) is well known on the Continent and is the patron of all metalworkers and farriers. He died at the age of 71 and his remains are in the Cathedral at Noyon. There is a statue of him in the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey".

All the soldiers gathered in a small hall where they normally have some their coffee break and chat between their intensive work. We had a good Service. Reflecting on their work, I asked the question:

"You drive the troops to fulfil the task, but what or who drives you to live and work the best way you can?"

Everybody had the opportunity to reflect on that question. Following prayers and Blessings, the mechanic team were given some treats. You may know the fact - when the padre comes without any treats his mission can fail (a tiny joke of course). You could see the joy and release on people's faces after that nice celebration. We shared a few words with some of the lads, when I became aware of a picture and a few personal belongings of a friend and colleague of the soldiers who had passed away in Germany. His close friends told me a few stories about him and his service. A small prayer was offered to all in honour of their friend. That moment was so humbling. It will remain with me for life.

The celebrations were shorter than usual as the soldiers had many different time sensitive tasks ahead of them.

May God Bless and keep them all safe and sound!

Army Foundation College (AFC) Harrogate



Confirmations at the Army Foundation College By Fr David Burke, Chaplain at AFC Harrogate

It was a great privilege and pleasure to confirm 3 of our Junior Soldiers at the Army Foundation College. Junior Soldiers Matthew, Luke and Harrison received the Sacrament of Confirmation during our regular 7pm Sunday mass in the college chapel.

Our young Confirmandi spent several weeks participating in the *Sycamore* programme prior to receiving the sacraments of initiation. Present on the joyous evening, when we asked for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, were family members and sponsors. At the end of the mass, other junior soldiers who were at mass, congratulated them on their achievement. Please do continue to keep our Junior Soldiers and Staff at the Army Foundation College very much in your prayers





MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 58th WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Artificial Intelligence and the Wisdom of the Heart: Towards a Fully Human Communication

Dear brothers and sisters!

The development of systems of artificial intelligence, to which I devoted my recent Message for the World Day of Peace, is radically affecting the world of information and communication, and through it, certain foundations of life in society. These changes affect everyone, not merely professionals in those fields. The rapid spread of astonishing innovations, whose workings and potential are beyond the ability of most of us to understand and appreciate, has proven both exciting and disorienting. This leads inevitably to deeper questions about the nature of human beings, our distinctiveness and the future of the species *homo sapiens* in the age of artificial intelligence. How can we remain fully human and guide this cultural transformation to serve a good purpose?

Starting with the heart

Before all else, we need to set aside catastrophic predictions and their numbing effects. A century ago, Romano Guardini reflected on technology and humanity. Guardini urged us not to reject “the new” in an attempt to “preserve a beautiful world condemned to disappear”. At the same time, he prophetically warned that “we are constantly in the process of becoming. We must enter into this process, each in his or her own way, with openness but also with sensitivity to everything that is destructive and inhumane therein”. And he concluded: “These are technical, scientific and political problems, but they cannot be resolved except by starting from our humanity. A new kind of human being must take shape, endowed with a deeper spirituality and new freedom and interiority”. [1]

At this time in history, which risks becoming rich in technology and poor in humanity, our reflections must begin with the human heart. [2] Only by adopting a spiritual way of viewing reality, only by recovering a wisdom of the heart, can we confront and interpret the newness of our time and rediscover the path to a fully human communication. In the Bible, the heart is seen as the place of freedom and decision-making. It symbolizes integrity and unity, but it also engages our emotions, desires, dreams; it is, above all, the inward place of our encounter with God. Wisdom of the heart, then, is the virtue that enables us to integrate the whole and its parts, our decisions and their consequences, our nobility and our vulnerability, our past and our future, our individuality and our membership within a larger community.

This wisdom of the heart lets itself be found by those who seek it and be seen by those who love it; it anticipates those who desire it and it goes in search of those who are worthy of it (cf. *Wis* 6:12-16). It accompanies those willing to take advice (cf. *Prov* 13:10), those endowed with a docile and listening heart (cf. *1 Kg* 3:9). A gift of the Holy Spirit, it enables us to look at things with God’s eyes, to see connections, situations, events and to uncover their real meaning. Without this kind of wisdom, life becomes bland, since it is precisely wisdom – whose Latin root *sapere* is related to the noun *sapor* – that gives “savour” to life.

Opportunity and danger

Such wisdom cannot be sought from machines. Although the term "artificial intelligence" has now supplanted the more correct term, "machine learning", used in scientific literature, the very use of the word "intelligence" can prove misleading. No doubt, machines possess a limitlessly greater capacity than human beings for storing and correlating data, but human beings alone are capable of making sense of that data. It is not simply a matter of making machines appear more human, but of awakening humanity from the slumber induced by the illusion of omnipotence, based on the belief that we are completely autonomous and self-referential subjects, detached from all social bonds and forgetful of our status as creatures.

Human beings have always realized that they are not self-sufficient and have sought to overcome their vulnerability by employing every means possible. From the earliest prehistoric artifacts, used as extensions of the arms, and then the media, used as an extension of the spoken word, we have now become capable of creating highly sophisticated machines that act as a support for thinking. Each of these instruments, however, can be abused by the primordial temptation to become *like God without God* (cf. *Gen 3*), that is, to want to grasp by our own effort what should instead be freely received as a gift from God, to be enjoyed in the company of others.

Depending on the inclination of the heart, everything within our reach becomes either an opportunity or a threat. Our very bodies, created for communication and communion, can become a means of aggression. So too, every technical extension of our humanity can be a means of loving service or of hostile domination. Artificial intelligence systems can help to overcome ignorance and facilitate the exchange of information between different peoples and generations. For example, they can render accessible and understandable an enormous patrimony of written knowledge from past ages or enable communication between individuals who do not share a common language. Yet, at the same time, they can be a source of "cognitive pollution", a distortion of reality by partially or completely false narratives, believed and broadcast as if they were true. We need but think of the long-standing problem of disinformation in the form of fake news, [3] which today can employ "deepfakes", namely the creation and diffusion of images that appear perfectly plausible but false (I too have been an object of this), or of audio messages that use a person's voice to say things which that person never said. The technology of simulation behind these programmes can be useful in certain specific fields, but it becomes perverse when it distorts our relationship with others and with reality.

Starting with the first wave of artificial intelligence, that of social media, we have experienced its ambivalence: its possibilities but also its risks and associated pathologies. The second level of generative artificial intelligence unquestionably represents a qualitative leap. It is important therefore to understand, appreciate and regulate instruments that, in the wrong hands could lead to disturbing scenarios. Like every other product of human intelligence and skill, algorithms are not neutral. For this reason, there is a need to act preventively, by proposing models of ethical regulation, to forestall harmful, discriminatory and socially unjust effects of the use of systems of artificial intelligence and to combat their misuse for the purpose of reducing pluralism, polarizing public opinion or creating forms of groupthink. I once more appeal to the international community "to work together in order to adopt a binding international treaty that regulates the development and use of artificial intelligence in its many forms". [4] At the same time, as in every human context, regulation is, of itself, not sufficient.

Growth in humanity

All of us are called to grow together, in humanity and as humanity. We are challenged to make a qualitative leap in order to become a complex, multiethnic, pluralistic, multireligious and multicultural society. We are called to reflect carefully on the theoretical development and the practical use of these new instruments of communication and knowledge. Their great possibilities for good are accompanied by the risk of turning everything into abstract calculations that reduce individuals to data, thinking to a mechanical process, experience to isolated cases, goodness to profit, and, above all, a denial of the uniqueness of each individual and his or her story. The concreteness of reality dissolves in a flurry of statistical data.

The digital revolution can bring us greater freedom, but not if it imprisons us in models that nowadays are called "echo chambers". In such cases, rather than increasing a pluralism of information, we risk finding ourselves adrift in a mire of confusion, prey to the interests of the market or of the powers that be. It is unacceptable that the use of artificial intelligence should lead to groupthink, to a gathering of unverified data, to a collective editorial dereliction of duty. The representation of reality in "big data", however useful for the operation of machines, ultimately entails a

substantial loss of the truth of things, hindering interpersonal communication and threatening our very humanity. Information cannot be separated from living relationships. These involve the body and immersion in the real world; they involve correlating not only data but also human experiences; they require sensitivity to faces and facial expressions, compassion and sharing.

Here I think of the reporting of wars and the “parallel war” being waged through campaigns of disinformation. I think too of all those reporters who have been injured or killed in the line of duty in order to enable us to see what they themselves had seen. For only by such direct contact with the suffering of children, women and men, can we come to appreciate the absurdity of wars.

The use of artificial intelligence can make a positive contribution to the communications sector, provided it does not eliminate the role of journalism on the ground but serves to support it. Provided too that it values the professionalism of communication, making every communicator more aware of his or her responsibilities, and enables all people to be, as they should, discerning participants in the work of communication.

Questions for today and for the future

In this regard, a number of questions naturally arise. How do we safeguard professionalism and the dignity of workers in the fields of information and communication, together with that of users throughout the world? How do we ensure the interoperability of platforms? How do we enable businesses that develop digital platforms to accept their responsibilities with regard to content and advertising in the same way as editors of traditional communications media? How do we make more transparent the criteria guiding the operation of algorithms for indexing and de-indexing, and for search engines that are capable of celebrating or canceling persons and opinions, histories and cultures? How do we guarantee the transparency of information processing? How do we identify the paternity of writings and the traceability of sources concealed behind the shield of anonymity? How do we make it clear whether an image or video is portraying an event or simulating it? How do we prevent sources from being reduced to one alone, thus fostering a single approach, developed on the basis of an algorithm? How instead do we promote an environment suitable for preserving pluralism and portraying the complexity of reality? How can we make sustainable a technology so powerful, costly and energy-consuming? And how can we make it accessible also to developing countries?

The answers we give to these and other questions will determine if artificial intelligence will end up creating new castes based on access to information and thus giving rise to new forms of exploitation and inequality. Or, if it will lead to greater equality by promoting correct information and a greater awareness of the epochal change that we are experiencing by making it possible to acknowledge the many needs of individuals and of peoples within a well-structured and pluralistic network of information. If, on the one hand, we can glimpse the spectre of a new form of slavery, on the other, we can also envision a means of greater freedom; either the possibility that a select few can condition the thought of others, or that all people can participate in the development of thought.

The answer we give to these questions is not pre-determined; it depends on us. It is up to us to decide whether we will become fodder for algorithms or will nourish our hearts with that freedom without which we cannot grow in wisdom. Such wisdom matures by using time wisely and embracing our vulnerabilities. It grows in the covenant between generations, between those who remember the past and who look ahead to the future. Only together can we increase our capacity for discernment and vigilance and for seeing things in the light of their fulfilment. Lest our humanity lose its bearings, let us seek the wisdom that was present before all things (cf. *Sir* 1:4): it will help us also to put systems of artificial intelligence at the service of a fully human communication.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 24 January 2024

FRANCIS



1. What word is never said during Lent?
2. What is traditionally Forbidden in Lent?
3. What is the first day of Lent called?
4. What is the last day of Lent called?
5. What is the most common thing to give up during Lent?
6. What feast day always comes through Lent?
7. Which devotion has special place during Lent?
8. How are ashes made for Ash Wednesday?
9. What does not happen on Good Friday?
10. Which is the last Sunday of Lent?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 27 will be published in Issue 28 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com

Answers to Newsletter Issue 26: 1. Salt, 2. Paul, 3. John the Baptist, 4. Abraham, 5. Psalms, 6. Zebedee, 7. Simeon, 8. Matthew, 9. Delilah, 10. Revelation.

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.



Chrism Mass

Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 1200 hrs

The annual Chrism Mass brings together the Bishop, Priests and Deacons and Lay People of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force to celebrate the blessing of the oils of Catechumens, Chrism and the Sick. The Chaplains will renew their priestly vows and commitment in front of the people.

Further details can be obtained from:

Mrs Diane Restall, Tel: 01252 348234 or Email: Dianerestall654@mod.gov.uk

Event >>>

*Annual Mass for Deceased Chaplains
Westminster Cathedral
1st May 2024 (Timings TBC)*



Event >>>

International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2024



The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 23rd May 2024, returning Monday 27th May 2024.

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

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? The Bishopric of the Forces is offering 4 opportunities to go on a retreat in 2024. 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 2024, Douai Abbey in Berkshire, Worth Abbey in West Sussex, Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire and St Mary's, Kinnoull in Perthshire.



ST MARYS KINOULL 29 APR - 2 MAY 24



DOUAI ABBEY 23 - 28 JUN 24



WORTH ABBEY 14 - 17 OCT 24



AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 11 - 14 Nov 24

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 2022DIN01-013
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: rafprccpastoralassistant457@outlook.com



Key Dates in February & March

Shrove Tuesday – *13th February*

Ash Wednesday – *14th February*

1st Sunday of Lent – *18th February*

The Chair of St Peter, Apostle (Feast) – *22nd February*

St Polycarp, Bishop, Martyr

(Memorial) – *23rd February*

2nd Sunday of Lent – *25th February*

St David, Bishop, Patron of Wales
(Solemnity) – *1st March*

3rd Sunday of Lent - *3rd March*

4th Sunday of Lent – *10th March*

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 Assistant (PA) to PRCC(A) at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com