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*"Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, or even at their difficulty, as at the love with which we do them" St Therese of Lisieux*



## *Army Roman Catholic Newsletter*



### *Welcome*

*From*

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



Welcome to Issue 20 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

This time of year is always very busy for our chaplains and this year has been no different. Another successful IMP has just taken place and you will be able to read reflections on the pilgrimage as well as see some very good photographs of the event in this newsletter. We ask our lady to intercede with our petitions particularly in this month of May which honours Mary. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

## *The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - 31<sup>st</sup> May*



The feast of the Visitation recalls to us the following great truths and events: The visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth shortly after the Annunciation; the cleansing of John the Baptist from original sin in the womb of his mother at the words of Our Lady's greeting; Elizabeth's proclaiming of Mary, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as Mother of God and "blessed among women"; Mary's singing of the sublime hymn, *Magnificat* ("My soul doth magnify the Lord") which has become a part of the daily official prayer of the Church. The Visitation is frequently depicted in art and was the central mystery of St. Francis de Sales' devotions.

The Mass of today salutes her who, in her womb bore the King of heaven and earth, the Creator of the world, the Son of the Eternal Father, the Sun of Justice. It narrates the cleansing of John from original sin in his mother's womb. Hearing herself addressed by the loftiest title of "Mother of the Lord" and realizing what grace her visit had conferred on John, Mary broke out in that sublime canticle of praise proclaiming prophetically that henceforth she would be venerated down through the centuries:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to me, and holy is His name" (Lk. 1:46) — Excerpted from the *Cathedral Daily Missal*

This feast is of medieval origin, it was kept by the Franciscan Order before 1263, and soon its observance spread throughout the entire Church. Previously it was celebrated on July 2. Now it is celebrated between the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord and the birth of St. John the Baptist, in conformity with the Gospel accounts. Some places appropriately observe a celebration of the reality and sanctity of human life in the womb. The liturgical colour is white.

### **The Visitation**

*And Mary rising up in those days went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda. [Lk. 1:39]*

How lyrical that is, the opening sentence of St. Luke's description of the Visitation. We can feel the rush of warmth and kindness, the sudden urgency of love that sent that girl hurrying over the hills. "Those days" in which she rose on that impulse were the days in which Christ was being formed in her, the impulse was his impulse.



Many women, if they were expecting a child, would refuse to hurry over the hills on a visit of pure kindness. They would say they had a duty to themselves and to their unborn child which came before anything or anyone else.



The Mother of God considered no such thing. Elizabeth was going to have a child, too, and although Mary's own child was God, she could not forget Elizabeth's need—almost incredible to us, but characteristic of her.

She greeted her cousin Elizabeth, and at the sound of her voice, John quickened in his mother's womb and leapt for joy.

I am come, said Christ, that they may have life and may have it more abundantly. [Jn. 10, 10] Even before He was born His presence gave life.

With what piercing shoots of joy does this story of Christ unfold! First the conception of a child in a child's heart, and then this first salutation, an infant leaping for joy in his mother's womb, knowing the hidden Christ and leaping into life.

How did Elizabeth herself know what had happened to Our Lady? What made her realize that this little cousin who was so familiar to her was the mother of her God?

She knew it by the child within herself, by the quickening into life which was a leap of joy.

If we practice this contemplation taught and shown to us by Our Lady, we will find that our experience is like hers.

If Christ is growing in us, if we are at peace, recollected, because we know that however insignificant our life seems to be, from it He is forming Himself; if we go with eager wills, "in haste," to wherever our circumstances compel us, because we believe that He desires to be in that place, we shall find that we are driven more and more to act on the impulse of His love.



# *In the Right Place at the Right Time*

Written by Fr Volodymyr Sampara



In the right place at the right time Or,  
"My experience of war in Ukraine and Interflex in Great Britain"

My vocation to become a chaplain in the British Army started approximately 6 years ago when one of my fellow priests asked me whether I would like to serve in the Army as a 'Padre'. Various circumstances conspired to delay the idea but, in 2021 things began to turn around and made it possible to fulfil my dream. I applied to the Army in May of that year and passed the Selection Board in the October. The last day I served as a parish priest in Manchester was 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022 and the very next day, 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022, I began the Chaplains' course at the Military Academy in Shrivenham. Mod A lasts 3 weeks, after which Rev Paul Garnell (Church of England) and I, moved immediately to the RMAS for the Commissioning Course Short (CSS), to be fully trained and commissioned as chaplains of the Armed Forces.

While in this training field, I received news from my commanders that a full Russian invasion had started in Ukraine. It was predictable because, the war had actually begun in 2014 when they occupied the Crimea and Donbass areas; it was only a matter of time before Russia would try to invade the whole country. As a Ukrainian by origin, I feared greatly for the safety of my relatives and realised in that moment that I could help them. Something inside my heart gave me confidence that I would be able to support my country in some way. Thanks to the British government and the people of Great Britain, Operation Interflex began: a training ground where Ukrainian soldiers have the opportunity to come here, away from the front line, and get the best training on NATO standards. For that time, I finished Sandhurst and was posted to 1 Yorks Light Infantry Battalion; with their backing, I can support our troops.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023 was Communications Sunday, although the date has passed, the information is still very relevant.

Bishops' Conference of Scotland

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Peter Kearney M.A. (Hons)  
DIRECTOR

Dear Rev Father

### **57th World Communications Day – Sunday 21 May 2023**

This year Pope Francis has chosen, as the theme for Communications Sunday:  
***Speaking with the heart. “The truth in love” (Eph 4:15)***

The theme, which connects with that of 2022 – “Listen with the ear of the heart” is intended to form part of the path that will lead the entire Church to the celebration of the Synod in October 2023. Speaking with the heart, means giving “a reason for your hope” and by doing so gently, “using the gift of communication as a bridge and not as a wall.”

It is an invitation to “go against the grain” at a time characterized by polarization and heated debates that exacerbate tempers – even in ecclesial life. In the dramatic context of conflicts in different regions of the globe, the theme affirms the importance of non-hostile communication and promotes, “a communication open to dialogue with the other, that fosters “integral disarmament”. In his message, the Pope calls on everyone, and in particular those who work in the field of communications to exercise their profession “as a mission for building a more just, more fraternal and more human future.”

Through our websites, publications and social media channels. The Bishops' Conference works hard to forge positive relationships with media outlets to communicate news relating to every aspect of the life of the Catholic Church. I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your help promoting this work. Below you will find some intercessions which you may wish to use on Communications Sunday, together with the full text of the Pope's message.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Kearney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**PETER KEARNEY**  
Director



## **The Pope's message for the 57th World Communications Day follows the theme speaking with the heart. “The truth in love” (Eph 4:15)**

Speaking with the heart. “The truth in love” (Eph 4:15)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After having reflected in past years on the verbs “to go and see” and “to listen” as conditions for good communication, with this Message for the LVII World Day of Social Communications, I would like to focus on “speaking with the heart”. It is the heart that spurred us to go, to see and to listen, and it is the heart that moves us towards an open and welcoming way of communicating. Once we have practised listening, which demands waiting and patience, as well as foregoing the assertion of our point of view in a prejudicial way, we can enter into the dynamic of dialogue and sharing, which is precisely that of communicating in a cordial way. After listening to the other with a pure heart, we will also be able to speak following the truth in love (cf. Eph 4:15). We should not be afraid of proclaiming the truth, even if it is at times uncomfortable, but of doing so without charity, without heart. Because “the Christian’s programme” — as Benedict XVI wrote — “is ‘a heart which sees’ ”.<sup>1</sup> A heart that reveals the truth of our being with its beat and that, for this reason, should be listened to. This leads those who listen to attune themselves to the same wave length, to the point of being able to hear within their heart also the heartbeat of the other. Then the miracle of encounter can take place, which makes us look at one another with compassion, welcoming our mutual frailties with respect rather than judging by hearsay and sowing discord and division.

Jesus warns us that every tree is known by its fruit (cf. Lk 6:44): “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (v. 45). This is why, in order to communicate truth with charity, it is necessary to purify one’s heart. Only by listening and speaking with a pure heart can we see beyond appearances and overcome the vague din which, also in the field of information, does not help us discern in the complicated world in which we live. The call to speak with the heart radically challenges the times in which we are living, which are so inclined towards indifference and indignation, at times even on the basis of disinformation which falsifies and exploits the truth.

### **Communicating cordially**

Communicating in a cordial manner means that those who read or listen to us are led to welcome our participation in the joys, fears, hopes and suffering of the women and men of our time. Those who speak in this way love the other because they care and protect their freedom without violating it. We can see this style in the mysterious wayfarer who dialogues with the disciples headed to Emmaus, after the tragedy that took place at Golgotha. The Risen Jesus speaks to them with the heart, accompanying the journey of their suffering with respect, proposing himself and not imposing himself, lovingly opening their minds to understand the profound meaning of what had happened. Indeed, they can joyfully exclaim that their hearts burned within them as he spoke to them on the road and explained the Scriptures to them (cf. Lk 24:32).



In a historical period marked by polarisations and contrasts — to which unfortunately not even the ecclesial community is immune — the commitment to communicating “with open heart and arms” does not pertain exclusively to those in the field of communications; it is everyone’s responsibility. We are all called to seek and to speak the truth and to do so with charity. We Christians in particular are continually urged to keep our tongue from evil (cf. Ps34:13), because as Scripture teaches us, with the same tongue we can bless the Lord and curse men and women who were made in the likeness of God (cf. Jas 3:9). No evil word should come from our mouths, but rather “only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29).

Sometimes friendly conversations can open a breach even in the most hardened of hearts. We also have evidence of this in literature. I am thinking of that memorable page in Chapter XXI of *The Betrothed* in which Lucia speaks with the heart to the Innominato [the Unnamed] until he, disarmed and afflicted by a healthy inner crisis, gives in to the gentle strength of love. We experience this in society, where kindness is not only a question of “etiquette” but a genuine antidote to cruelty, which unfortunately can poison hearts and make relationships toxic. We need it in the field of media, so that communication does not foment acrimony that exasperates, creates rage and leads to clashes, but helps people peacefully reflect and interpret with a critical yet always respectful spirit, the reality in which they live.

Communicating heart to heart: “In order to speak well, it is enough to love well”

One of the brightest and still fascinating examples of “speaking with the heart” is offered by Saint Francis de Sales, a Doctor of the Church, whom I wrote about in the Apostolic Letter, *Totum Amoris Est*, 400 years after his death. In addition to this important anniversary, I would like to mention another anniversary that takes place in 2023: the centenary of his proclamation as patron of Catholic journalists by Pius XI with the Encyclical, *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*. A brilliant intellectual, fruitful writer and profound theologian, Francis de Sales was Bishop of Geneva at the beginning of the XVII century during difficult years marked by heated disputes with Calvinists. His meek attitude, humanity and willingness to dialogue patiently with everyone, especially with those who disagreed with him, made him an extraordinary witness of God’s merciful love. One could say about him: “A pleasant voice multiplies friends, and a gracious tongue multiplies courtesies” (Sir 6:5). After all, one of his most famous statements, “heart speaks to heart”, inspired generations of faithful, among them Saint John Henry Newman, who chose it as his motto, *Cor ad cor loquitur*. One of his convictions was, “In order to speak well, it is enough to love well”. It shows that for him communication should never be reduced to something artificial, to a marketing strategy, as we might say nowadays, but is rather a reflection of the soul, the visible surface of a nucleus of love that is invisible to the eye. For Saint Francis de Sales, precisely “in the heart and through the heart, there comes about a subtle, intense and unifying process in which we come to know God”.<sup>2</sup> By “loving well”, Saint Francis succeeded in communicating with Martin, the deaf-mute, becoming his friend. This is why he is also known as the protector of people with impairments in communicating.



It is from this “criterion of love” that, through his writings and witness of life, the saintly Bishop of Geneva reminds us that “we are what we communicate”. This goes against the grain today, at a time when — as we experience especially on social media — communication is often exploited so that the world may see us as we would like to be and not as we are. Saint Francis de Sales disseminated many copies of his writings among the Geneva community. This “journalistic” intuition earned him a reputation that quickly went beyond the confines of his diocese and still endures to this day.

His writings, Saint Paul VI observed, provide for a “highly enjoyable, instructive and moving” reading.<sup>3</sup> If we look today at the field of communications, are these not precisely the characteristics that an article, a report, a television or radio programme or a social media post should include? May people who work in communications feel inspired by this saint of tenderness, seeking and telling the truth with courage and freedom and rejecting the temptation to use sensational and combative expressions.

Speaking with the heart in the synodal process

As I have emphasised, “In the Church, too, there is a great need to listen to and to hear one another. It is the most precious and life-giving gift we can offer each other”.<sup>4</sup> Listening without prejudice, attentively and openly, gives rise to speaking according to God’s style, nurtured by closeness, compassion and tenderness. We have a pressing need in the Church for communication that kindles hearts, that is balm on wounds and that shines light on the journey of our brothers and sisters. I dream of an ecclesial communication that knows how to let itself be guided by the Holy Spirit, gentle and at the same time, prophetic, that knows how to find new ways and means for the wonderful proclamation it is called to deliver in the third millennium. A communication which puts the relationship with God and one’s neighbour, especially the neediest, at the centre and which knows how to light the fire of faith rather than preserve the ashes of a self-referential identity. A form of communication founded on humility in listening and parrhesia in speaking, which never separates truth from charity.

Disarming souls by promoting a language of peace

“A soft tongue will break a bone”, says the book of Proverbs (25:15). Today more than ever, speaking with the heart is essential to foster a culture of peace in places where there is war; to open paths that allow for dialogue and reconciliation in places where hatred and enmity rage. In the dramatic context of the global conflict we are experiencing, it is urgent to maintain a form of communication that is not hostile. It is necessary to overcome the tendency to “discredit and insult opponents from the outset [rather] than to open a respectful dialogue”.<sup>5</sup>



We need communicators who are open to dialogue, engaged in promoting integral disarmament and committed to undoing the belligerent psychosis that nests in our hearts, as Saint John XXIII prophetically urged in the Encyclical *Pacem In Terris*: “True peace can only be built in mutual trust” (No. 113). A trust which has no need of sheltered or closed communicators but bold and creative ones who are ready to take risks to find common ground on which to meet. As was the case sixty years ago, we are now also living in a dark hour in which humanity fears an escalation of war that must be stopped as soon as possible, also at the level of communication. It is terrifying to hear how easily words calling for the destruction of people and territories are spoken. Words, unfortunately, that often turn into warlike actions of heinous violence. This is why all belligerent rhetoric must be rejected, as well as every form of propaganda that manipulates the truth, disfiguring it for ideological ends. Instead, what must be promoted is a form of communication that helps create the conditions to resolve controversies between peoples.

As Christians, we know that the destiny of peace is decided by conversion of hearts, since the virus of war comes from within the human heart.<sup>6</sup> From the heart come the right words to dispel the shadows of a closed and divided world and to build a civilisation which is better than the one we have received. Each of us is asked to engage in this effort, but it is one that especially appeals to the sense of responsibility of those working in the field of communications so that they may carry out their profession as a mission.

May the Lord Jesus, the pure Word poured out from the heart of the Father, help us to make our communication clear, open and heartfelt.

May the Lord Jesus, the Word made flesh, help us listen to the beating of hearts, to rediscover ourselves as brothers and sisters, and to disarm the hostility that divides.

May the Lord Jesus, the Word of truth and love, help us speak the truth in charity, so that we may feel like protectors of one another.

Francis

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 24 January 2023, Memorial of Saint Francis de Sales.

[1] Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 31.

[2] Apostolic Letter *Totum Amoris Est* (28 December 2022).

[3] Cf. Apostolic Epistle *Sabaudiae Gemma*, on the IV Centennial of the Birth of Saint Francis de Sales, Doctor of the Church (29 January 1967).

[4] Message for the LVI World Day of Social Communications (24 January 2021).

[5] Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 201.

[6] Cf. Message for the 56th World Day of Peace (1 January 2023).

# *HCPT Hosanna House and Children's Pilgrimage Trust*



Fr David Burke (Centre of centre row) taking part in the Bishopric of the Armed Forces HCPT Pilgrimage this April. For more information on HCPT please follow the link:  
<https://www.rcbishopricforces.org.uk/hcpt>

Fr. David Burke accompanied the Bishopric HCPT group, comprising of members from the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and children, to Lourdes during Easter week. The theme of the week was: The Lord is my Shepherd.



# *63<sup>rd</sup> International Military Pilgrimage*

## *Lourdes 11-15 May 2023*

Our Chaplains and pilgrims have recently returned from another successful International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. We have some reflections from first time pilgrims and Cadets from St. John Henry Newman Catholic College CCF plus plenty of photographs to share with you.





Alfie Lockett:

In Lourdes I have grown a lot as a person, and I have experienced and opened my eyes in lots of ways. I have physically grown, because I have marched along with the army, which was very uplifting and made me feel very connected to cadets. It has made me determined and motivated me. It also pushed me when doing the run and sports day as it was very challenging. Culturally, I have grown, by seeing the different ways people live; not just how British people experience day to day life but, it has broadened my views on matters. I didn't realise, for instance how the French people did things differently. Personally, I have religiously grown by seeing how much other people have delved into the spiritual side of religion and how powerful their belief in God is. It has allowed me to think about my personal faith. When I went to mass and I really enjoyed connecting with the community. I allowed myself to pray for my family and those who are in need. It was very interesting to see the amazing buildings and it permitted me to understand what I have learnt in RE. I have been able to put that learning into action in prayer and get really involved with the church.



Poppy Tattersall:

My experience of the 63rd IMP in Lourdes has been what I can only describe as eye-opening. My faith and belief in God has been unstable in the last few years despite growing up Catholic. This has been due to many unanswered questions and difficulty accepting some of the teachings of the Bible. I had questions about my career, my future ambitions to one day become a part of the military and the conflict with Catholic teachings and my own moral compass that comes with military life.

Lourdes has inexplicably reawakened my spiritual beliefs and my trust and faith in God, and I am beyond grateful for that opportunity due to the feeling of finding myself again. Meeting people from all walks of life broadened my perspective of diverse culture, something I had always been aware of but never witnessed first-hand. Being a part of the IMP feels like your part of something huge, just looking around and seeing brothers and sisters in arms throughout the world praying, partying, and celebrating one another was something to cherish for the rest of my life.



Hayden Lindley:

Lourdes has been a very sentimental and mesmerising experience. The atmosphere and environment is very picturesque and amazing to look at. I have massively improved in confidence in myself from with this experience. The connection with my religion, when we lit the candles and visited the grotto was uplifting and personally strengthening. Speaking to the other countrys' soldiers was a huge confidence boost. Personally, I think the best experience in Lourdes was the marching. The bands were fantastic, and it was so mesmerising to march too. The overall experience was very memorable and the connection between all the cadets was amazing.



Parys Durkin:

Personally, it was a privilege to come to this pilgrimage for a second time, I had just as good a time as last year. As a person, who walked in with no belief, I am now walking out questioning everything about religion. I loved it, I have never felt so spiritually connected with a place or religion, but especially seeing how other cultures celebrate theirs. Coming to another land and coming together with forty-three countries was a life changing experience and especially with the privilege of being able to go twice means so much to me, being able to go with my friends just made it even more magical. There has been tears of happiness, multiple times from how spiritually connected we all felt. Lourdes really is an amazing place, but no one believes how beautiful and emotionally you feel until you have had the experience yourself. I am grateful to be able to come on this journey, and to be able to embrace myself further in religion.



Ethan Jackson:

In Lourdes I have culturally experienced the unity of different countries around the world and how we all come together through religion. I also liked that all the British contingent came together in one. I have physically done lots of marching and walking. Spiritually I have experienced lots of religious experiences including masses etc and the holy water from stream.

James Murphy:



In Lourdes, spiritually it has opened my eyes more to being a Catholic by going through my first mass and then many more of them while I was there. In addition, culturally, going through Lourdes it was amazing to be able to interact with different members from different nations such as Cote D'ivoire , Germany , Ireland and the Netherlands . Also, it was great to meet different people and see the grotto and to take part in the physical competition.

Ronnie Bardsley:

At Lourdes I have been spiritually and mentally challenged, and then in turn I have grown as a person. I have had so much fun in Lourdes. I have bought a lot of gifts and it has rekindled my friendship with my best mate, so I am so grateful for the opportunity and adventure.







Harry Houghton:

During the time that I have been at Lourdes, I have been able to embrace the opportunities of the spiritual and mental education that has helped me to understand a deeper meaning of life. I noticed the difference in people because, they were open minded and talked about their backgrounds and their personal lives. That made me appreciate the beauty of diverse lifestyles. Additionally, I have admired how religion can unite people in community, to care and love through a spiritual purpose. For myself, I feel throughout this experience, as a catholic, it has enabled me to embrace my spiritual change as an individual and find a deeper connection with God.



Chloe Hughes:

My Lourdes experience has been phenomenal! Culturally, it is so diverse and unique and I could understand the difference in military aspects and drill. It feels like everyone is there to comfort, support and redirect your devotion to God or yourself, even if you are not religious. Personally, I have been refreshed and cleansed with new beginnings to a better life. The pilgrimage has helped me reconnect with myself and it has influenced me to be grateful for what I have and how to fully

respect, appreciate and acknowledge the benefits of being respectful and kind towards others. After lighting the candles and praying for others, I was hit with a wave of grief for my grandma who had passed away a few years back and it helped me remember her. I never really had the time to reflect on her life and the life-changing effect she has made on me. Spirituality, I have noticed the seriousness and devotion people put in towards their prayer which amazed me as I am not a catholic but an agnostic. However, it may sound crazy but, walking through the grotto in the rain, I could feel some sort of presence like something is there that I cannot explain. The mass is absolutely incredible and calming. I could use my knowledge from RE in school, which gave me a greater understanding.

Maja Steinherdt:

Overall, my trip to Lourdes has impacted me in many ways, mentally and physically. I do not think I have ever felt so at peace and welcomed, by not only the military personnel and tourists, but also by God. As someone who was unsure about their belief(s), Lourdes opened many possibilities and chances for me to explore my faith, through masses, the walk through the stations of the cross and candle lighting. Lourdes has left me with many great memories and moments to reflect on in the future and will be a recommendation for people who are trying to find themselves, their beliefs and what or who is important in their lives.





# MY FIRST MILITARY PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES, FRANCE

REFLECTIONS BY: FR. VOLODYMYR SAMPARA

CHAPLAIN OF 1 ROYAL YORKS LIGHT MECHANISED INFANTRY BATTALION, ROYAL YORKSHIRE REGIMENT, CATTERICK



It is a well known fact that for Christians some places of worship have a particular spiritual value. One reason for this is through the apparitions of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. We know of such places at Fatima and Lourdes! Many people who believe or are searching for answers about God, faith and meaning of life, seek for those answers in such places as Lourdes. In Lourdes in 1858, a local girl, Bernadette, had an apparition of our lady. Now millions of pilgrims come to Lourdes, physical and spiritual healings have happened over the years. Many people have witnessed their spiritual renewal of faith, or they have been given answers to some of their questions. The Catholic Church, the main host of this beautiful place, located in the marvellous Pyrenees mountains in France, receive thousands of people.

Following WWII, France and Germany decided to reconcile their nations and Armies through the common pilgrimage on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of apparitions in 1958. Since then, every year more countries join in this spiritual pilgrimage and this year 2023 the 63<sup>rd</sup> International Military Pilgrimage took place. We saw 16,500 military personnel from 41 countries around the world coming to this place, praying together, and celebrating. It was very emotional to meet two Colonels from Ukraine who brought military families to pray for Victory.

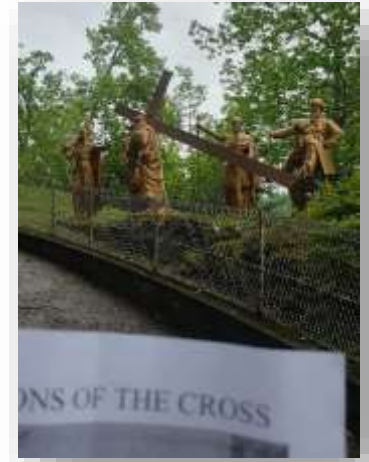


It may sound a bit strange, but I am confident that this place and the pilgrimage to it, is not only one's personal decision, but God's plan to give us some spiritual experience and even those who do not believe in God, felt some "particular grace". There were different denominations among our delegation from the United Kingdom. We had Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants, Baptists, Methodists, Gurkhas, Sikhs, nonbelievers, and many other people. This was a great opportunity for us as chaplains to speak to people, explain to them some Catholic traditions about prayer and time being together before God. Our prayers were lead by our Bishop Paul Mason - Bishop to the Armed Forces.

Sometimes, we meet people by chance and realise that the meeting was not accidental. There was a young girl who is joining the Royal Navy soon. She said to me that she doesn't know God and it is hard for her to understand this. My answer was not to be afraid, just pray and open your heart. Holy Mary, Mother of God will do the rest, asking Her Son Jesus Christ our Saviour to give you His special gift from Heaven.

A senior officer told me about his experience of faith, and that as he ages, he finds it increasingly difficult to enhance his faith and find answers. He had an opportunity to speak to different Catholic chaplains during the pilgrimage and as we said goodbye at the airport, he said to me: "Father Vlod, I am so grateful to you all for those conversations about faith and God. I have received so much information to reflect on and review my previous opinions that I need some time for that".

I hope that many of our pilgrims will get their "spiritual boxes" from God delivered and unpacked in proper time, because God's Plan is to save all His children (us people) from condemnation and bring us to His Holy Kingdom.



The Cathedral of the Forces, St Michael and St George,



On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023 we saw the Coronation of King Charles III. To mark the occasion Louise Morgan-Jones completed a kneeler. Kneelers such as this has made are often found in our churches and have traditionally celebrated key events in the life of the Church or in the lives of our Monarchy. You may remember in our last issue, Louise completed a kneeler to mark the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth II.





## *COFFEE AND CHAT ZOOM MEET - STARTING TUE 9 MAY*

There is the opportunity for women (serving personnel/spouses/partners/family members) to get together via Zoom every couple of months for a relaxed gathering to talk about their faith, lives, and to offer support and prayers for each other.

This initiative is being led by Felicity Mitchell, the wife of RAF chaplain, Ashely Mitchell. The first meeting took place on Tue 9 May starting at 8pm.

To sign up, or for more information, please contact Felicity at: [felicitymitchell100@gmail.com](mailto:felicitymitchell100@gmail.com)

## *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.





## What do you know about Lourdes ?

1. Approximately, what is the population of Lourdes, France?
2. What year did the Virgin Mary appear to Bernadette Soubirous?
3. Approximately, how many pilgrims visit Lourdes each year?
4. How many Basilicas are there in Lourdes and can you name any?
5. What date is the Assumption of Mary, the main feast day in Lourdes?
6. What year did Bernadette Soubirous become St. Bernadette?
7. At what time does the candle-lit procession take place every night?
8. What year did healings at the spring start to take place?
9. What are the names of the three important summits that Lourdes is nestled in?
10. What did Mary call herself at Lourdes?
11. What year did the last miracle take place at Lourdes?
12. What is the symbol of Lourdes?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 20 will be published in Issue 21 or email Karen at: [ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com](mailto:ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com)

Answers to Newsletter Issue 19: 1. Egypt, 2. Fat Tuesday, 3. Time Jesus spent in the desert, 4. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, 5. Arms crossed in prayer, 6. Joseph of Arimathea, 7. Mary of Magdala, 8. 14, 9. Angels, 10. Death & Resurrection of Jesus

## World Youth Day – Lisbon 2023



**31 July - 7 August 2023**

from £1,779 - 8 days / 7 nights

**Spiritual Leader Bishop Paul Mason**

**Organised by Jeremy Wynne (tel. 07834 609153),**

(Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the Royal Air Force Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain)

*If anyone from the Army is interested in attending this event please make contact with the Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (Army) - Mrs Karen Horn MBE, [armyrcpaa21@gmail.com](mailto:armyrcpaa21@gmail.com)*



## Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

*"His reputation continued to grow, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their sickness cured, but he would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray". Luke 5: 15-16.*

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? The Bishopric of the Forces is offering 3 opportunities to go on a retreat in 2023. 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.

Once again, for 2023, Douai Abbey in Berkshire, Worth Abbey in West Sussex and Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire will be used. All 3 retreat locations are Benedictine Abbeys. Those attending the retreats will gain insight into Benedictine spirituality which is centred on the core values of silence, prayer, obedience, stewardship, listening, humility, peace, work, living in community and hospitality. Through led sessions, periods for prayer and reflection, and with the opportunity to join with the monastic community in the Abbey Church in praying the Daily Office, retreat participants will be refreshed and reinvigorated in the exploration and renewal of their faith.



DOUAI ABBEY 13 - 16 JUN 23

WORTH ABBEY 18 - 21 SEP 23

AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 30 OCT - 2 NOV 23

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 once it is published. Alternatively, please contact to register your interest or to receive further information:

Wg Cdr (rtd) Jem Wynne, Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain. Tel: 07834609153 Email: [rafprccpastoralassistant457@outlook.com](mailto:rafprccpastoralassistant457@outlook.com)

Sgt Caroline Routledge, Dep Retreats Coordinator, SNCO System Coordinator, Mission Support, Centre, RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire, LN4 4SY. Tel: 95721 8075 Email: [caroline.routledge475@mod.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.routledge475@mod.gov.uk)



## Key Dates in May & June

- Pentecost Sunday (Solemnity) – 28<sup>th</sup> May  
The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
(Feast) – 31<sup>st</sup> May  
Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest  
(Feast) – 1<sup>st</sup> June  
The Most Holy Trinity (Solemnity) – 4<sup>th</sup> June  
The Most Holy Body & Blood of the Lord  
(Solemnity) – 11<sup>th</sup> June  
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus  
(Solemnity) – 16<sup>th</sup> June  
The Nativity of John the Baptist  
(Solemnity) – 24<sup>th</sup> June  
St Peter & St Paul, Apostles  
(Solemnity) – 29<sup>th</sup> June

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](mailto:ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com)