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**" The Holy Rosary is a powerful weapon. Use it with confidence and you'll be amazed at the results."  
St. Josemaria Escriva**



**ARMY**

## *Army Roman Catholic Newsletter*



### *Welcome*

*From*

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



Welcome to Issue 23 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

In a world increasingly fraught with troubles and challenges, the power of prayer remains a beacon of hope and solace. As we gather once again in the spirit of unity, this newsletter serves as a reminder of the strength we find in coming together, transcending boundaries and seeking support in the divine. We hope the contents of this newsletter provides inspiration and encouragement as we navigate the challenges of our time and tap into the incredible power of prayer.

# *Ministry in Motion*



## *'An Island-hopping chaplain'*

*By Fr Kevin Dow*

Fr. Kevin Dow, Chaplain to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion the Rifles, is currently deployed on Op Interflex in Hampshire. It is classed as an "overseas Operation" for the Battalion, as the Unit is based over the Irish Sea in Northern Ireland! BHQ, along with 'B' and 'C' Companies are leading Training Delivery Unit 4 of Interflex, and so the Chaplain is stationed alongside the main component of the Battalion. However, once a month Fr. Kevin returns to Lisburn to minister to the Catholic Military Community in NI and to provide chaplaincy services to the rear group of the Battalion based in Thiepval Barracks.

In the meantime, 'A' Company of the Battalion have been deployed to the Falkland Islands. Along with RSM Walker, Fr. Kevin made the long journey down to visit them for a planned 4 night stay. Anyone who has made the journey to the Falkland Islands knows that it is not a simple hop, skip and a jump away - 17 hours flying with a 2 hour stop over in the Ascension Islands means basically 2 days out the diary each way.



A comprehensive schedule had been put together by the chain of command of 'A' Company for 3 days of the visit, including briefings on 'A' Company's activities and a tour on their role as the Falkland Islands Roulement Infantry Company (FIRIC). On the program's first afternoon, the RSM had lined up interviews with some members of the company and Fr. Kevin took the opportunity to join Padre Al Nicoll, the Deputy Chaplain in Chief of the RAF, who was also visiting the Island and the current resident chaplain - Padre Neil Galloway RAF on a pastoral visit to HMS Medway. A first for Fr. Kevin, being onboard one of His Majesty's Ships. All stops were pulled out for the visit (the joys of being with a 1\*!) with a tour of the ship and a chance to meet with the crew across the 3 messes and get a feel for how life in the RN is compared to the Army and RAF. As part of the FIRIC, members of 2 Rifles had spent a few weeks on board the naval vessel in protecting the Island communities and had a great experience trying out new military tactics.



*Padre Al Nicholl, Deputy Chaplain in Chief RAF, Padre Neil Galloway RAF, Fr Kevin Dow CF onboard HMS Medway along with the XO and Officer of the Watch.*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the pastoral visit, a series of briefings were given by SO2s Land, Sea and Air in the JOC HQ giving an insight into living and working on the Islands. The afternoon was an 'afternoon of firsts' for this chaplain. Taking a helicopter ride across the Islands to Johnson's Harbour to visit one of the foot patrols that the Roulement Infantry Company were providing, fulfilled a childhood dream and brought a grin from ear to ear on his face, and a joy not felt for a long time.



There may or may not have been a few thousand penguins seen during this part of the visit, with a walk along the shore to Volunteer Point to meet the rest of the foot patrol, resulting in plenty of photos being taken of King Penguins, Gentoo Penguins and Magellanic Penguins, along with a seal who thought that OC A Coy was a giant penguin and was looking to eat him!



After a few hours there, the group of OC, Chaplain, RSM, and Radio Operator returned to the helicopter and taking the members of the foot patrol with them, dropped the patrol group off at the township (of a few houses) where they were based in a fisherman's cottage, before returning to Mount Pleasant Complex. That evening, Fr Kevin celebrated Mass in St Cuthbert's Chapel, assisted at the altar by Deacon Neil with Padre Al as congregation, for the Memorial of St Vincent de Paul. The third day of the visit was to Onion Ranges, located in "No Man's Land" to watch live firing section attacks. A long drive in a rickety land rover held together with tape and socks saw Fr Kevin adorned in full body



armour, observing Riflemen in their element. A short Service of Remembrance was held for 'A' Coy after the range exercise at the main camp location of the ranges, under the freshly restored Rifles Cap Badge, for those who had died during and subsequently as a result of the Falkland's conflict.

Following lunch, in a surprisingly well-appointed cookhouse/portacabin, Fr. Kevin had an opportunity to join the Riflemen in their welfare room/portacabin and chat with them about how things were going, and getting to know some of the characters in the Company. The last official evening in the Islands was spent by the chaplain joining with the RSM, CSM CSgt and Sgts of 'A' Coy in a pleasant dinner hotel in Stanley, the capital city of the Falklands. After an early start on the last day (0300hrs departure), everything was going well and all were onboard the aircraft for the return on the air-bridge heading back to Brize Norton. However, after the captain gave the call to the cabin crew to cross check doors, a few minutes later, he announced that "Rotars" were blowing in off the mountains and that we would be going nowhere!

So a few days extra were spent in the Falklands - which is suspicious as a Race Night was being held in the Officer's Mess and a certain chaplain came away a lot lighter in pocket! An extended stay over Saturday and Sunday morning meant that Chaplains could do what chaplains do best.

Saturday morning was spent in the Oasis Café with a group of service personnel from 2 Rifles over tea and cake, and in the afternoon, the Rector of Christ Church Cathedral in Stanley came up to Mount Pleasant to have a look around and to celebrate and Anglican Eucharist, which was received well by a small crowd of service personnel and their families. On Sunday, Deacon Neil presided at his normal service of extended morning prayer and liturgy of the Word, bringing together military personnel and their families from all denominations, with Fr Kevin following on with the Liturgy of the Eucharist for the Catholics present. Finally after a few days extra stay on the other side of the world, the chaplain to 2 Rifles managed to get back to the mainland UK in time to celebrate Mass in the Cathedral Church of St Michael and St George, Aldershot - much to the relief of the VG!

# *Hearing God Speak in Silence*



*By Deacon John Power*

At the beginning of October, I went on my Annual Retreat. I choose to go to the same place every year: St. Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre in beautiful North Wales. The retreat house is set in a former Jesuit Theology College, built in 1848 and which since the 1970's has been used in a variety of forms to accompany people as the journey through life with God.



My retreat was a 5 day individually guided and silent retreat. The only opportunity to speak each day was during a 45-minute appointment with my Spiritual Director; the rest of the day including meals were in silence.

On day 1 my Spiritual Director asked me if there was any specific I wanted to focus upon during the retreat. I was conscious that I had been busier than ever before with life at a Phase 1 Training Establishment and also had considerable responsibility looking after the Garrison Memorial Church of St. Joan of Arc. My aim was to simply reflect upon where was God in all the business and the challenges of this working environment.



St. Beunos is set in some spectacular countryside in the Vale of Clywd and views from the retreat house stretch over the Irish Sea and towards the Llandudno and the Great Orme. On a clear day, Mount Snowdon's peaks can be clearly seen. The grounds that the house is set in are also beautiful with many focal points to stop and pray. I was particularly drawn towards the labyrinth which is major feature of the grounds in a secluded area. Walking into and from the labyrinth enabled me to see that my spiritual life needed some focus and attention.

I spoke about this to my Spiritual Director who suggested some passages of scripture to reflect and pray with. I was particularly drawn to 'I am with you always, to the end of the age.' Matthew 28:20 It is part of scripture in St. Matthew's Gospel known as the Great Commissioning. I prayed with this passage and reflected upon God's own

Call in my life, to serve the Church as a Permanent Deacon and as an Army Chaplain in the Bishopric of the Forces. I began to realise that I had not revisited and contemplated these to calls to serve God often enough in my prayer life.

At the end of the silent retreat I really did feel that God had spoken to me quite profoundly in the silence and beauty of St. Beuno's. His message was that the without prayer and contemplation on His call to ministry, the role of Chaplain can become almost inauthentic. Our busy and disparate role as Chaplains has to flow from a life rooted in prayer, must have its beginning and end in Christ who has called us in His Great Commissioning to 'Go to the ends of the earth' to make His Love known.

In summary, the week spent at St. Beuno's was a good reset. A personal call to discipline in prayer. A call to the realisation that the pastoral work that we undertake on behalf of the Army and the Bishopric of the Forces is a call from God for Him to be made known to those we serve by what we do and say and by who we are: People who are rooted in a life of prayer.



# *Honouring the faithful A Veteran Chaplain's Story*

*By Monsignor Stephen Alker*



Monsignor Stephen Alker MBE, a former Principal RC Chaplain in the Army, continues to provide pastoral support to Service Veterans in Merseyside. He currently serves as the chaplain to the Thin Red Line, an informal gathering of all-Service veterans who convene every two months for lectures followed by lunch at either the Athenaeum Club or the Artists Club. Additionally, he is an active member of several organisations, including the Centurians of Merseyside, the Alexandrians, and the Northwest Regional Forces and Cadet Association. In June, Monsignor Alker acted as the chaplain for the 'Altcar Pals of Merseyside' during a Battlefield Tour, which included visits to Dunkirk, two massacre sites, and the Ypres memorial.

A few months ago, he was honoured with the responsibility of leading a Service of Rededication to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Southport War Memorial, the largest such monument outside London. The Service was scheduled for Friday, September 29th, 2023. As the date approached, it was announced that the Princess Royal would attend the event.

Subsequently, the (Anglican) Bishop of Liverpool was contacted for representation, and the Archdeacon of Sefton, the Venerable Peter Spears, was chosen to represent him on the day. During the service, Monsignor Alker delivered a sermon on a beautiful autumn day, despite the inclement

weather in the days leading up to the event. The Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside and the Lord Mayor of Southport were in attendance, along with regular personnel from the Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force, including Reservists and Cadets from all three services.



Princess Anne engaged with many uniformed individuals and local school children following the service. Later, a reception was held at the Atkinson Centre, where invited guests, including the two priests who led the Service, had the privilege of meeting Princess Anne.





# OUR LADY OF THE HOLY ROSARY

Feast Day: Oct. 7



By tradition, the Catholic Church dedicates each month of the year to a particular devotion. The month of October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary as the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary falls on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The best way to celebrate the month is of course to pray the Rosary.



Known for several centuries by the alternate title of "Our Lady of Victory," the feast day takes place in honour of a 16th century naval victory which secured Europe against Turkish invasion. Pope St. Pius V attributed the victory to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was invoked on the day of the battle through a campaign to pray the Rosary throughout Europe.

The feast always occurs one week after the similar Byzantine celebration of the Protection of the Mother of God, which most Eastern Orthodox Christians and Eastern Catholics celebrate on October 1 in memory of a 10th-century military victory which protected Constantinople against invasion after a reported Marian apparition.

Pope Leo XIII was particularly devoted to Our Lady of the Rosary, producing 11 encyclicals on the subject of this feast and its importance in the course of his long pontificate.

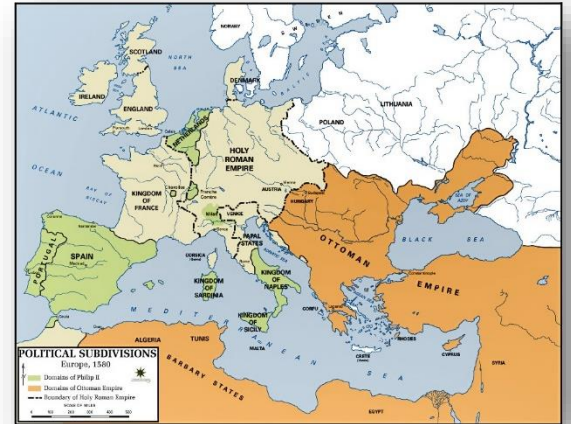
In the first of them, 1883's "Supremi Apostolatus Officio," (See note 1) he echoed the words of the oldest known Marian prayer (known in the Latin tradition as the "Sub Tuum Praesidium" See note 2), when he wrote, "It has always been the habit of Catholics in danger and in troublous times to fly for refuge to Mary." "This devotion, so great and so confident, to the august Queen of Heaven," Pope Leo continued, "has never shone forth with such brilliancy as when the militant Church of God has seemed to be endangered by the violence of heresy ... or by an intolerable moral corruption, or by the attacks of powerful enemies." Foremost among such "attacks" was the battle of Lepanto, a perilous and decisive moment in European and world history.



Troops of the Turkish Ottoman Empire had invaded and occupied the Byzantine empire by 1453, bringing a large portion of the increasingly divided Christian world under a version of Islamic law. For the next hundred years, the Turks expanded their empire westward on land, and asserted their naval power in the Mediterranean. In 1565 they attacked Malta, envisioning an eventual invasion of Rome. Though repelled at Malta, the Turks captured Cyprus in the fall of 1570.

The next year, three Catholic powers on the continent - Genoa, Spain, and the Papal States - formed an alliance called the Holy League, to defend their Christian civilization against Turkish invasion. Its fleets sailed to confront the Turks near the west coast of Greece on October 7, 1571.

Crew members on more than 200 ships prayed the Rosary in preparation for the battle - as did Christians throughout Europe, encouraged by the Pope to gather in their churches to invoke the Virgin Mary against the daunting Turkish forces.



Some accounts say that Pope Pius V was granted a miraculous vision of the Holy League's stunning victory. Without a doubt, the Pope understood the significance of the day's events, when he was eventually informed that all but 13 of the nearly 300 Turkish ships had been captured or sunk. He was moved to institute the feast now celebrated universally as Our Lady of the Rosary.

"Turkish victory at Lepanto would have been a catastrophe of the first magnitude for Christendom," wrote military historian John F. Guilmartin, Jr., "and Europe would have followed a historical trajectory strikingly different from that which obtained."

Reference: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint/feast-of-our-lady-of-the-rosary-617>

Notes:

- [https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_01091883\\_supremi-apostolatus-officio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01091883_supremi-apostolatus-officio.html)
- Ancient Prayer to Our Lady (Sub Tuum Praesidium)

We fly to thy protection,  
O Holy Mother of God,  
Despise not our petitions in our necessities,  
But deliver us always from all dangers,  
O Glorious and blessed Virgin.

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus,  
Sancta Dei Genetrix,  
Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus,  
Sed a periculis libera nos semper,  
Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.



## Religions of the World Part 2



1. What is the world's fourth largest religion with over 520 million followers?
2. Which celebration is often called the Hindu festival of lights?
3. Collectively known as 'The Pillars of Islam', how many basic religious acts are there in Islam?
4. The break of communion between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches in 1054 was known as the 'Great' what?
5. Name the founder of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers?
6. In the 1970s, which European country declared itself the world's first atheist state?
7. Which group of traditionalist Christians of Swiss German Anabaptist origins was founded by Jakob Ammann?
8. Which people's religious practices include animism and shamanism, in which spiritual healers mediate with spirits?
9. In 1517, who launched the Protestant Reformation by posting The Ninety-Five Theses on the door of All Saints' Church, Wittenberg?
10. Can you name the ancient Jewish religious manuscripts found in the Qumran Caves in the Judean Desert in the 1940s?
11. Which form of Christianity is the national religion of Scotland?
12. Which Christian holiday celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ?
13. Name the large body of religious texts which are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism?
14. In almost all Christian traditions today, the New Testament consists of how many books?
15. The world headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is located in which American city?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 23 will be published in Issue 24 or email Karen at: [ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com](mailto:ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com)

Answers to Newsletter Issue 22: 1. Hinduism, 2. Japan, 3. Shiva, 4. India, 5. Saudi Arabia, 6. Polytheism, 7. Judasism, Islam & Christianity, 8. Bodh Gaya, 9. Mohammed, 10. Worship only one God, 11. Christianity - RC, 12. Abraham, 13. Christianity & Islam, 14. Hinduism, 15. Christianity.

# 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.

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 27<sup>th</sup> 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

Event >>>

# *Annual Mass for Deceased Chaplains Westminster Cathedral*

*1<sup>st</sup> May 2024*



## ***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 an opportunity to go on a retreat in 2023. The retreat is 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.

The last retreat for 2023 is at Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire. This retreat location is a Benedictine Abbey. Those attending the retreat 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.



**AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 30 OCT - 2 NOV 23**

The retreat is aimed at all levels of faith and knowledge, age groups, backgrounds, ranks and experiences. It will allow participants to challenge their preconceptions in a relaxed and non-judgmental environment. This venue offers a unique opportunity to take a fresh look at faith away from the pressures of everyday service life. The retreat 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 October & November

Our Lady of the Rosary (Memorial) – *7<sup>th</sup> October*

St John Henry Newman (Feast) – *9<sup>th</sup> October*

St Luke, Evangelist (Feast) – *18<sup>th</sup> October*

Ss Simon & Jude, Apostles (Feast) – *28<sup>th</sup> October*

All Saints (Solemnity) – *1<sup>st</sup> November*

The Commemoration of all the faithfully Departed  
(All Souls) – *2<sup>nd</sup> November*

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](mailto:ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com)