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"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

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



Welcome to Issue 21 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.
We mentioned in our last newsletter how busy many of our Chaplains have been and yet the pace continues to accelerate. Life seems to be so demanding these days. But, we must remember to make time to take care of ourselves in order that we may recharge and be effective in ministering to others. As humans we are finite, and we all have our limits. God tells us in Mark 6:31 "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."

Bishopric CPD 2-7 Jul The Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain



Rector: Fr Tom Kilbride



Spiritual Director: Fr Stuart Chalmers



“Thoughts, but more wanderings.....” By Fr Stephen Sharkey

As Roman Catholic Chaplains across the Bishopric, we spent five days together on our Continuous Personal Development program at the Royal Scots College, Salamanca. The piece I have written is a reflection of how Abbot Hugh Allen inspired my thoughts during the four sessions he delivered to us over two days. It is in what way his words had an impact on my own thoughts on ministry as a Chaplain to the Army based in Hereford. I have tried to credit where I could any quotes, please excuse those I missed or simply ascribed to Abbot Hugh.



'We all have to be agents of hope' (Pope Francis)

I think the statement from Pope Francis that 'we all have to be agents of hope' is what it is to be a military chaplain. It is to be honest the call, vocation and challenge to all priests, deacons and in fact all who profess to believe in God. Abbot Hugh seemed to look into my heart and mind as he spoke, I spoke with other Chaplains, they felt the same. I would like to say that we really had the privilege of being able to listen to his spiritual reflections they were deeply thought provoking and inspirational. Abbot Hugh spoke to us about the importance of 'hope' and opened to us that this is the reality of our vocation as we serve in our garrisons, bases, and ships.

'The first task of a priest is belief' (Pope Benedict XVI)

I am often asked what I do as a Chaplain, my response can be different every day but I often say I 'waste time fruitfully', that is wandering around saying hello, going into offices, Ops Rooms, garages and other areas where people work to simply have a presence, to let people of all faiths and none know that I am there, hopefully being someone they can talk to, to bring them hope when times are tough and to share their joy when times are good. - *It is to be there and stand by them and help carry the cross at times.*

'Our hope is union with God, it is difficult but not impossible to attain' (St Thomas Aquinas)

We are called as Chaplains to be Christ like, this involves us being called to do something or go somewhere we would rather not go, it might mean being separated from family and friends for months or being limited in communications as we serve in areas of the world with our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women. In times like this we share the journey with our servicemen and women, they see us possibly as friends, confidants, they sometimes cannot understand why we do what we do but really appreciate our presence, our love. Christ was called at times where he would rather not go, he took on the burden of humanity in the Garden of Gethsemane, we can all learn from this as he did it in silence. On the cross when Jesus died, this was in silence, when Jesus rose from the dead he did so from the silence of the tomb.

'Let the pastor be discreetly silent and to the point when they speak' (St Gregory the Great).

I often describe Chaplaincy in Hereford as being in a sort of stealth mode, that is silently getting alongside people and being. It can often be human nature to ask lots of questions but, that isn't the best thing to do here as it can be awkward for the person you are talking to, it is knowing when to ask the question, knowing when to speak and at times 'speaking only when words are of service' (St Gregory the Great).

'Words we speak should come from our heart, come from the lives we lead" (Abbot Hugh)

It is a challenge at times to keep our mouths closed, to know the times to talk and the times to speak are at times only learned after the pain of opening one's mouth. I often think we need to know when we can make a difference when we speak and when we might cause damage or lessen our future impact when we need to talk, it is as St Augustine says, 'be silent out of love, if you speak, speak out of love'.

"To be a minister we need to be: Someone who loves - Someone who is lovable" (Abbot Hugh)

We are all instruments of God's hope to all, we should always strive to live as men and women of hope. We need to use our energy wisely and remember that as St Thomas Aquinas said 'Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are'. We can all make a difference, but we need to remember to be gentle when we speak and at times keep in mind that we are 'agents of hope', not despair! There is nothing wrong with anger if channelled properly, as pope Francis said 'Anger can show us that people care - it can be positive'.

'Hope is nothing if it isn't shared" (Abbot Hugh)

Our vocation takes us to places the Chaplaincy Directorates discern to be where we are best placed, this might not be evident and can be a challenge as we go where we never asked to go and at times where we would definitely never choose to be. For me and many of the other Chaplains this can be every two years or less, it can be frustrating, or it can be a relief for some. In this we need to remember that God is a great Chess player, without suggesting any form of predetermination it is worth thinking that God is possibly 15 moves or so ahead, trust in God and remember to always hope, both for yourself and for others as we can often help people we care for the reason to go on.

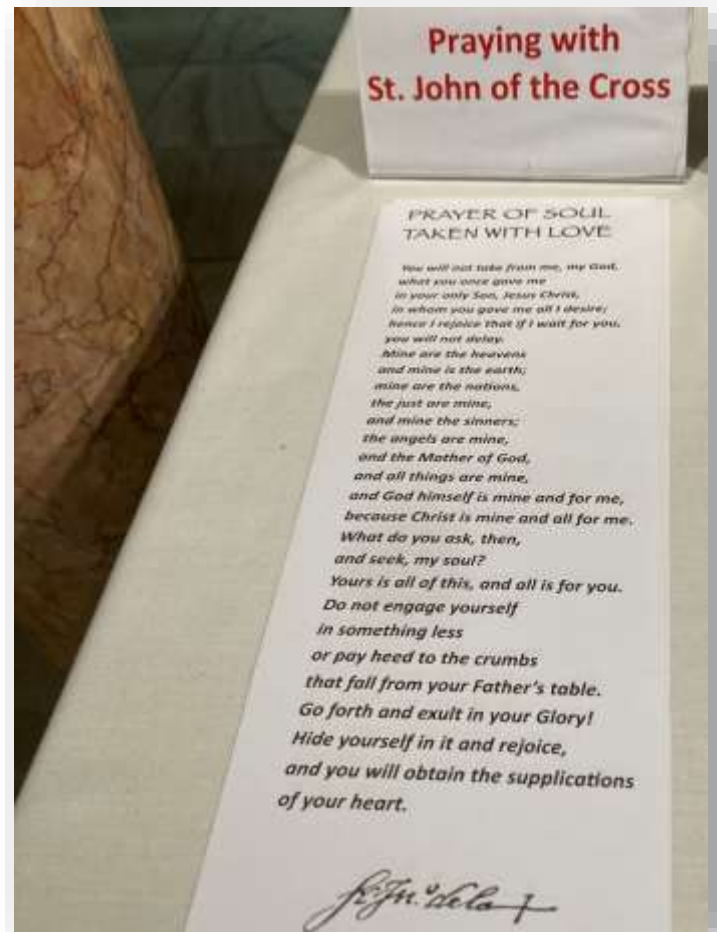
'We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.'" (Pope Francis)

Pope Francis says, we need to be 'Shepherds with the smell of the sheep', wherever we are go there with hope and serve with love. As Abbot Hugh says, 'You can't hope to leave the world a better place, but to leave it a better person'.

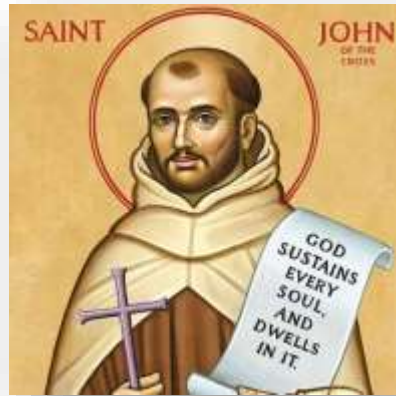
Recommended reading on hope is: Spe Salvi (Saved by Hope) Benedict XVI
Encyclical Letter on Christian Hope (CTS Publications)



During the CPD we travelled from Salamanca to Segovia where Mass was celebrated by Bishop Paul in the Carmelite Monastery at the tomb of St John of the Cross.



St John of the Cross



Saint John of the Cross was born Juan de Yepes y Alvarez, in Fontiveros, Avila, Spain in 1542. His father was employed by wealthy family members as an accountant, but they disowned him when he married a poor woman from the lower class. As a result of his family's poverty, John's family suffered greatly. His father died when he was three, and his older brother, Luis died two years after that, likely because of malnutrition. John's mother eventually found work weaving which helped her to feed her family.

As a child, John was sent to a boarding school for poor and orphaned children. He was given a religious education from a young age and chose to follow a religious path, even as a child. He served as an acolyte at an Augustinian monastery. As he grew older, he went to work in a hospital while attending a Jesuit school. In 1563, he was able to join the Carmelite Order and took the name, "John of St. Matthias." He made vows the following year, and was sent to the university in Salamanca to study theology and philosophy. He became an expert in the Bible and dared to translate the Song of Songs into Spanish, an act which was controversial since the Church forbade the translation of the Bible from Latin -a measure to protect the original meanings in the scripture.



John became a priest in 1567 and considered joining the Carthusian Order where monks lived cloistered in individual cells. He was attracted by the simple and quiet life. However, he encountered Theresa of Avila, a charismatic Carmelite nun. Theresa asked John to follow her. John was attracted by the strict routine followed by Theresa, a routine she hoped to reintroduce to her order, as well as her devotion to prayer and simplicity. Her followers went barefoot, and were therefore known as the discalced Carmelites. On Nov. 28, 1568, Theresa founded a new monastery. The same day, John changed his name again to John of the Cross. Within a couple years, John and his fellow friars, relocated to a larger site for their monastery. He remained at this location until 1572.

In 1572, John traveled to Avila at the invitation of Theresa to become her confessor and spiritual guide. He remained in Avila until 1577. While there, he had a vision of Christ and made a drawing that remains to this day called, "Christ from Above." The little drawing shows Christ on the cross, looking down on him from above. The image has been preserved for centuries.



Around 1575, a rift within the Carmelite order began to grow and create controversy between various monastic houses. There was disagreement between the Discalced Carmelites and the ordinary Carmelites, over reform. The Discalced Carmelites sought to restore the original, strict routine and regimen that the order had when it was founded. In 1432, the strict rules of the order were "mitigated" relieving the Carmelites of some of their most strict rules. Some Carmelites, such as Theresa of Avila, felt this liberalization of their rule had interfered with their order and practice. Theresa, along with John, sought to restore the original rule.

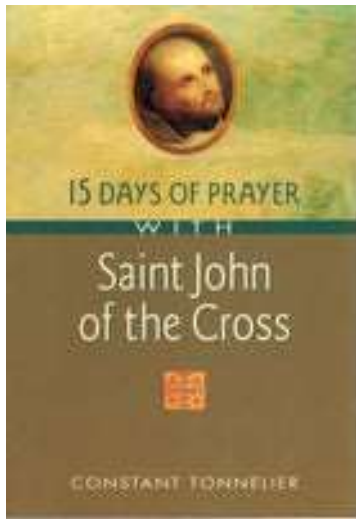
The Carmelites had been undergoing reform since 1566, under the direction of two Canonical Visitors from the Dominican Order, sent by the Vatican. The intervention of the Holy See as well as the political machinations of King Phillip II and his court, led to dramatic, even violent disagreement between the Carmelites. In late 1577, John was ordered to leave the monastery in Avila and to return to his original house. However, John's work to reform the order had already been approved by the Papal Nuncio, who was a higher authority. Based on that, John chose to ignore the lower order and stay. On December 2, 1577, a group of Carmelites broke into John's residence and kidnapped him. He was taken by force to the order's main house in Toledo. He was brought before a court and placed on trial for disobedience. He was punished by imprisonment. A cell was made for him in the monastery that was so small he could barely lie on the floor. He was fed only bread and water, and occasional scraps of salt fish. Each week he was taken into public and lashed, then returned to his cell. His only luxuries were a prayer book and an oil lamp to read it by. To pass the time he wrote poems on paper that was smuggled to him by the friar charged with guarding his cell.

John became known as a remarkable and influential poet, especially following his death. He has been cited as an influence to many poets, mystics, and artists, even Salvador Dali. After nine months, John managed to pry his cell door from its hinges and escape. He joined Teresa's nuns in Toledo, and spent six weeks in the hospital to recover. In 1579, he was sent to the town of Baeza to be rector of a new college and to support the Discalced Carmelites in Andalusia. In 1580, Pope Gregory formally authorized the split between the Discalced Carmelites and the rest of the order. This ended the rift within the order. At that time, there were about 500 members in the order living in 22 houses. During the last few years of his life, John traveled and established new houses across Spain. In 1591, John became ill with a skin condition that resulted in an infection. He died on December 14, 1591, John of

the Cross died. Shortly following his burial, there was a dispute over where he should be buried. The dispute was resolved by removing his legs and arms. Over the years, parts of his body were placed on display or buried across several places. Saint John of the Cross was beatified by Pope Clement X in 1675, and Canonized by Pope Benedict XIII in 1726. He is the patron of Contemplatives, mystics and Spanish poets and his feast day is celebrated on December 14.

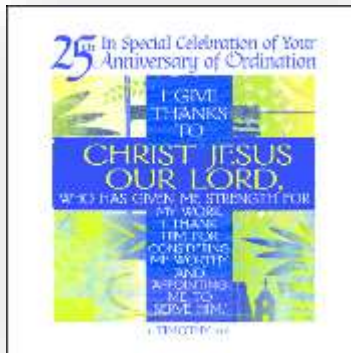


If you are interested in St John of the Cross, the following book is recommended:



Saint John of the Cross is known as the Doctor of Mystical Theology. The central theme of his mysticism is that through a life of pure faith and love of God, the soul may attain union with the Divine. As your retreat master and companion, John challenges you to become like Christ, to be wounded and suffer with Him, to be consumed by His presence and thus to be emptied of self, to be purified in heart and mind, and finally to be overcome and transformed by His love so that you love with God's love and discover your true image at the heart of the Trinity. The ultimate consequence of your 15 day journey with John of the Cross may therefore be the deep mystical union with God that John placed at the centre of the Christian life.

Celebrations!



Recently, 3 of our priests have celebrated 25 years of Ordination

29th May - Fr Nick Gosnell

7th June - Fr PJ O'Driscoll

25th July - Bishop Paul Mason

Please pray for their continued ministry

Bishops Visit to Ukrainian Recruits



Last month, Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop of the Forces and Bishop Kenneth Wowakowski, Ukrainian Catholic Eparch visited a training location in Kent. During their visit they saw the recruits being instructed and also held a brief field service. As part of the service, Bishop Paul and Bishop Kenneth blessed and presented rosaries to the recruits.





Around the churches

Cathedral Church of St Michael & St George, Aldershot

*First Holy Communion Mass,
Sunday 11th June 2023*

Sunday, 11th June saw 15 young people make their First Holy Communion. Please keep Kourtney, Jordan, Niall, Bethany, Marie-Albertine, Judith, Nicolette, Esme, Niamh, Rebecca, Arlo, Rafe, Molly, Hudson and Tariro in your prayers.



Many thanks go to the catechists; Mrs Yvonne Spreadborough, Mrs Paula Ryan and Mrs Pamela Brooks who have spent many months preparing them all. Also, thank you to the clergy who celebrated the Mass on the day; Fr. Nick Gosnell, Fr. Pip Smith and Deacon Tony D'Mello.

St Edward's Church, Pirbright

On Pentecost Sunday, Bishop Paul received into the Church, Recruit Joseph Noel who has joined the Royal Engineers.



Bishop Paul also presented Bishopric Medals to Dr Catherine McVeigh and Mrs Ethna Mertens. Between Cathy and Ethna they have supported the Catholic Community at St Edward's for over 50 years. During that time, they have not only been a great support to the Catholic Recruits but also to the many Catholic Chaplains who have passed through ATR Pirbright. They have both been generous to the community in many ways but most importantly with their time. Cathy and Ethna have always been ready to help organize the chapel in preparation for the Church's Seasons and Great Feasts. Without their help and support the Catholic Community would not be as welcoming or as flourishing as it is. The presentation came as a total shock to them both and it was a great joy to welcome both their families to celebrate the presentation.





St Patrick & St George's Tidworth

*First Holy Communion Mass, Sunday 4th June
2023*

Sunday 4th June was a special day for eight young parishioners from St Patrick's, Tidworth and Our Lady Queen of Peace, Bulford as they celebrated their First Holy Communion during the 9.00am mass. Skye, Alexander, Jeffrey, Eva, Ellie, Ansah, Ethan and Christian joyfully received Jesus in the Holy Eucharist for the first time from Fr David Burke in front of the usual mass congregation and the children's families and friends. The children, who were a joy to teach, had been preparing for this day since the beginning of March working with catechists Ann, Zena and Anna. After Mass everyone enjoyed a piece of cake which one of the parents kindly arranged. Let us keep these children, their families and friends very much in our prayers.



More Reflections from IMP, Lourdes – 2023

*By Colonel Matt Wills, Assistant Commander, 38 (Irish) Brigade
and the Northern Ireland Garrison*



Col Matt Wills (AComd 38X) with Fr Danny Hernandez (The 'Bish' of Gibraltar!)

I had been to Lourdes before. Both times, some 35 years ago as an inquisitive student taking advantage of the opportunities of Inter Rail. I was bowled over by my first visit. 'Jumbulances' from all over Europe disgorging the sick and disabled at the Shrine, made a lasting impression. Sadly, the second visit brought another vision - one of sordid commercialisation and beggar gangs preying on the Faithful. I undertook never to return. But now, fast approaching what I thought might be the 'last chance saloon', I actually made an effort to re-prioritise my life and attend the International Military Pilgrimage (IMP). I wondered if anything had changed at Lourdes, and which version of the 'truth' might still be a reality.

Being absolved of all responsibilities other than being in the right place at the right time, and trying to keep in step; sharing dining tables with whoever was in front of me in the queue, regardless of rank or cap badge; trading militaria with foreign troops from all over Europe; indulging in more than a solitary beer with our friends from the other side of the invisible Border; reliving childhood memories

of regular Mass and much loved hymns, surrounded by All Ranks, all connected by a common interest. For once, perhaps, to be in a majority in a church of my own Christian denomination, on duty and in uniform - all rather unsettling, but in a good way.

I found that my two visions of Lourdes had not changed at all. The Faithful and the sick were all around me and the beggars were out in full force as some 17,000 military pilgrims descended on the small town in the Pyrenees; but my years and experience enabled me to laugh at the dreadful shops full of tat and I even indulged in the purchase of plastic Mary bottles to fill with holy water to annoy my colleagues at home!

I completely lost track of time within a 'full on' itinerary, which only a military Chaplaincy could have contrived. Yet, there was still time for discussion about things that are usually left unsaid. As if personnel, perhaps uncomfortable to talk about their faiths, whatever they might be, in normal circumstances, now found themselves in a safe place where they could be open and free about their beliefs with people who only a few hours previously, had been complete strangers.

And of course, the silence of the Grotto at the dead of night; with only the illuminated statues and the stars for company, following in the footsteps of millions of pilgrims, enticed by the simple story of a peasant girl and her visions of Mary, brought an opportunity to focus on the important things in life and an attempt to listen to that inner voice, so often silenced by the clutter of the every day. How odd, to approach the end of a military career and only now realize that the real truth was there all the time - I just needed to make the effort to see it. Everyone should take advantage of the IMP - our spiritual health is just as important as the physical and the mental; and we should learn to look after it.





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

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.



Travel Itineraries

1. Who was on the road to Damascus when he was converted ?
2. Off which island was Paul shipwrecked?
3. Which two towns on Cyprus does Luke say Paul visited?
4. Which animal in Daniel's vision charged towards the west and the north and the south?
5. Where was Jesus when Nicodemus came to see him secretly at night?
6. Which island was John exiled to when he wrote the book of Revelation?
7. To which city did Peter travel to meet the Roman centurion Cornelius?
8. Following the first persecution of the church, the apostle Philip travelled to which city?
9. Where was Joseph taken by the Ishmaelite traders?
10. Who moved from Canaan to live in Sodom?
11. Why did Moses flee from Egypt to Midian?
12. Who according to Isaiah, will travel on the way of Holiness?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 21 will be published in Issue 22 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com

Answers to Newsletter Issue 20: 1. 15,000, 2. 1858, 3. 5 Million, 4. 3 Basilicas: Basilica of Immaculate Conception, Basilique de l'Immaculée Conception, also known as Upper Basilica dating back to 1871; the Underground Basilica of Pius X, built in 1958 to celebrate the first centenary of the apparitions; and the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, 5. 15 Aug, 6. 1933, 7. 9pm, 8. 1873, 9. Aneto, Montaigu and Vignemale, 10. Immaculate Conception, 11. 2008, 12. The fleur de lis (flower of the lily).

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

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, Worth Abbey in West Sussex and Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire will be used. Both 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.



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

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



Key Dates in July & August

St James, Apostle (Feast) – 25th July

Ss Joachim & Ann, parents of the Blessed Virgin

Mary (Memorial) – 26th July

St Martha, Mary & Lazarus

(Memorial) – 29th July

St Ignatius of Loyola (Memorial) – 31st July

The Transfiguration of the Lord

(Feast) – 6th August

St Lawrence, Martyr (Feast) – 10th August

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

(Solemnity) – 15th August

St Bartholomew, Apostle (Feast) – 24th August

The Passion of St John the Baptist

(Memorial) – 29th August

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