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"Love recognises no barriers" – Maya Angelou



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

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

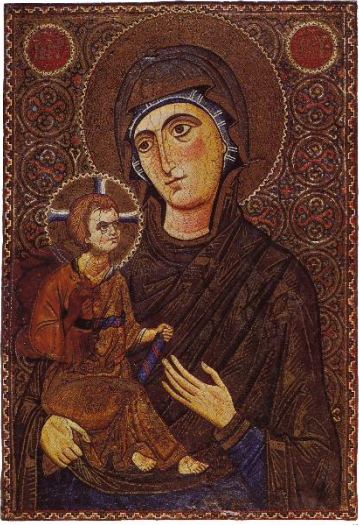


Welcome to Issue 30 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

During the month of May, we are reminded of the blessings of renewal and hope that spring brings. In this issue we explore the rich traditions and teachings of our faith, drawing inspiration from the life of the Virgin Mary to whom the month of May is dedicated and the devotions to Jesus of the Sacred Heart, just one of the Holy Solemnities we celebrate in June. May this newsletter be a source of spiritual nourishment and guidance as we navigate the joys and challenges of life, always guided by the light of Christ and the wisdom of our Catholic tradition.

May – Month of Mary

The month of May is the month which the devotion of the faithful has notably dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, and it is the season for a moving homage of faith and love which Catholics in every part of the world pay to her. During this month Christians, both in church and at home, offer up to Mary an especially fervent, heartfelt and loving tribute of prayer and veneration. In this month, too, "the benefits of God's mercy come down to us from her throne in greater abundance" (Paul VI: Encyclical on the month of May no. 1).



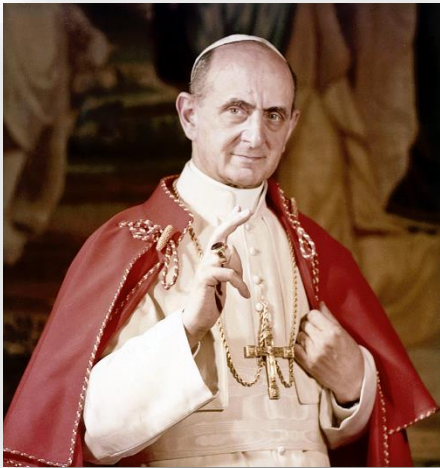
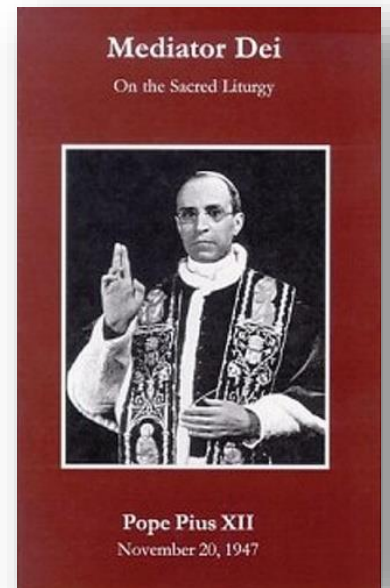
It was during the 13th Century that this Christian custom of dedicating the month of May to the Blessed Virgin developed. This enabled the Church to 'Christianise' the secular feasts which took place at that time. By the 16th century, books appeared and cultivated this devotion.



The Jesuit order adopted this practice and by 1700 it had influenced their students at the Roman College. It was soon publicly practiced in the *Gesu* church in Rome and from there was taken on by the whole church.

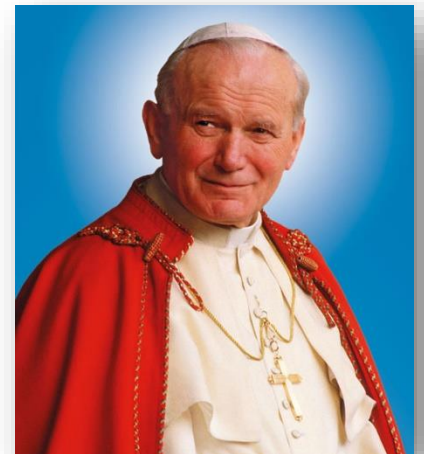
Pope Pius VII in 1815 granted a partial indulgence in this following and Pius IX granted a plenary (full) indulgence in 1859.

The holy practice of worshipping Our Lady during the month of May has been particularly suggested by the Popes. Pius XII made repeated reference to it and in his great Encyclical *on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Mediator Dei*) considered it as one of "other exercises of piety which although not strictly belonging to the Sacred Liturgy, are nevertheless of special import and dignity, and may be considered in a certain way to be an addition to the liturgical cult: they have been approved and praised over and over again by the Apostolic See and by the Bishops" (no. 182).



In 1965, Pope Paul VI wrote a short encyclical using the Month of Mary devotion as a means of acquiring prayers for peace. He encouraged the faithful to make use of this practice which is "gladdening and consoling" and by which the Blessed Virgin Mary is honoured and the Christian people are enriched with spiritual gifts" (no. 2).

In May of 2002 Pope John Paul II said, "Today we begin the month dedicated to Our Lady a favourite of popular devotion. In accord with a long-standing tradition of devotion, parishes and families continue to make the month of May a 'Marian' month, celebrating it with many devout liturgical, catechetical and pastoral initiatives!"



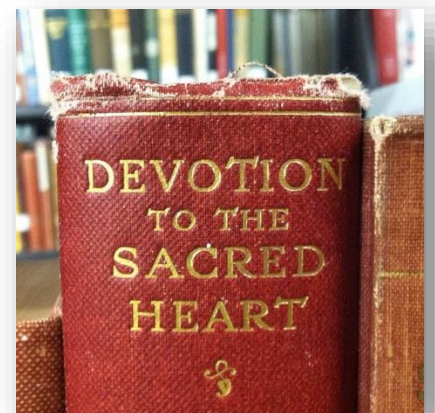
The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

7th June 2024



The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (*Cor Jesu Sacratissimum*) is one of the most extensively practiced and prominent Catholic devotions, in which the heart of Jesus Christ is recognised as a symbol of God's boundless and passionate love for mankind. The solemnity is celebrated on the second Friday following Trinity Sunday.

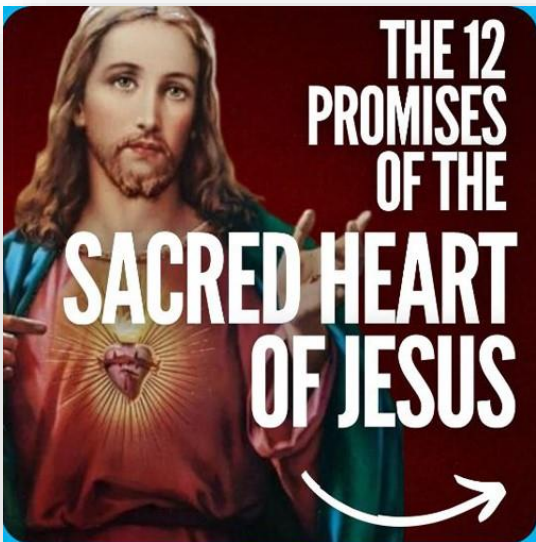
The devotion to the Sacred Heart started in the quiet stillness of Mary's womb when His Heart first began to beat. At Bethlehem, St. Joseph and Mother Mary adored His Heart as they held Him in their arms, gently gazing at the Christ Child and pondering the heartbeat of Emmanuel, "God with us." The first written account of this devotion to the Sacred Heart can be found in the Gospels when St. John rested upon His Heart during the Last Supper. In the late 1200's on the feast of St. John (December 27), St. Gertrude, a Benedictine nun and mystic, had a vision where St. John, appearing with Jesus on His left side, invited her to the right of Jesus to rest her head near the wound in His side so she could hear Christ's beating heart. She wrote in her book *Herald of Divine Love* that this filled her with sweetness and joy. She asked St. John why he spoke so little in his Gospel "of the loving secrets of the Heart of Jesus?" St. John answered, "My mission was to write of the Eternal Word but the language of the blissful pulsations of the Sacred Heart is reserved for latter times, that the time-worn world, grown cold in the love of God, may be warmed up by hearing of such mysteries."





About 400 years later, during a time when the world had grown cold and had forgotten the tenderness and mercy of Christ's love, Jesus appeared to St. Margaret Mary on St. John's feast in 1673 in Paray-le-Monial, France. He revealed to her His Heart burning with Love for humanity. In the vision, Jesus asked her to spread devotion to His Sacred Heart and instructed her how the devotion should be practiced. The devotion as we know it today is largely based from Jesus' revelations to St. Margaret Mary.

"Behold the Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, in order to testify Its love; and in return, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for Me in this Sacrament of Love. But what I feel most keenly is that it is hearts which are consecrated to Me, that treat Me thus. Therefore, I ask of you that the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special Feast to honour My Heart, by communicating on that day, and making reparation to It by a solemn act, in order to make amends for the indignities which It has received during the time It has been exposed on the altars. I promise you that My Heart shall expand Itself to shed in abundance the influence of Its Divine Love upon those who shall thus honour It, and cause It to be honoured."



The twelve promises of the Sacred Heart, as given by Our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque:

Jesus reveals the tenderness of His Heart and the 12 promises He pledged to those who love Him and honour His Sacred Heart. If you've ever thought, "God couldn't possibly love me, I haven't earned it," that's Jansenist thinking, a heresy that plagued France. The plain truth is - God loves us no matter what! Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary: "Announce it and let it be announced to the whole world, that I set neither limit nor measure to My gifts for those who seek them in My Heart."

Dhekelia Station Church of Saint Barnabas



Fr. John Moriarty received Cpl Scott Berryman, into the Church and Confirmed him at the church of St Barnabas, Dhekelia on Easter Sunday.

In the photograph we have sponsor Helena, Cpl Scott Berryman and Fr. John Moriarty. Please keep Scott in your prayers as he continues his journey of faith.

The Crypt Westminster Cathedral



On 1st May, several Chaplains of the Forces celebrated the annual Deceased Chaplains' Mass in the Crypt at Westminster Cathedral followed by a luncheon in London.

Those in attendance (left to right in the photograph) were:

Fr. Michael Fava CBE, Fr. Ian Stevenson - PRCC(A), Fr. David Conroy - PRCC(RN), Msgr. Stephen Alker MBE, Bishop Paul Mason - Bishop of the Forces, Dcn. David Skillen - PRCC(RAF), Msgr. Phelim Rowland, Fr. Nick Gosnell - VG.

St Edward the Confessor Church Pirbright



Saturday, 11th May, saw the Bishop of the Forces, Bishop Paul Mason, confer the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation for 2 Army recruits at St Edward's church.



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

The Army Foundation College Harrogate



Exercise Lions Spirit - The Army Foundation College *Written by Fr David Burke*

During April, Fr David, Chaplain at the Army Foundation College, accompanied junior soldiers from Burma, Peninsula and Alamein Companies on an extensive battlefield study of Normandy and in particular the sites of the D-Day landings. Exercise Lions Spirit, which was supported by a team of experienced guides and teaching staff, gave a strong and informed insight into the courage, integrity, discipline of those soldiers who landed on the Normandy beaches on the 6th June 1944. Soldiers who were not much older than our junior soldiers, who nevertheless made the ultimate sacrifice. Please continue to keep our junior soldiers in your prayers, especially those who will soon be passing out as well as those who find training difficult.



St Joan of Arc Catterick Garrison

May Day Baptism



At the beginning of the month of May, Our Lady, the catholic garrison community of St Joan of Arc was privileged to welcome its newest member, as we celebrated the Baptism of Baby Euan. His extended family travelled from far and wide for this great day with support, prayers (and cake) given by the parishioners of St Joan of Arc, on this great day of celebration. Please do keep Euan, his parents and godparents very much in your prayers as they begin their new respective journeys of faith. Our Lady, Mother of the Church. Pray for us.

Ministry in Motion

On 19th May, Fr. Volodymyr Sampara concelebrated at Dormition of the Holy Mary Church in Manchester, where 27 children received their First Holy Communion. Please hold these children in your prayers as they move forward in their faith journey.



From Left to Right:

Fr. Vlody Sampara, his daughter Sofiya, his wife Tetiana and son Yosafat.

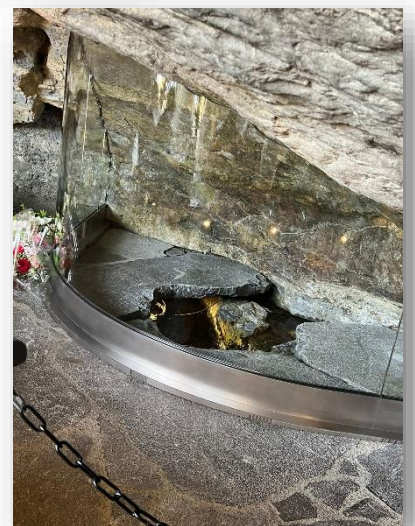
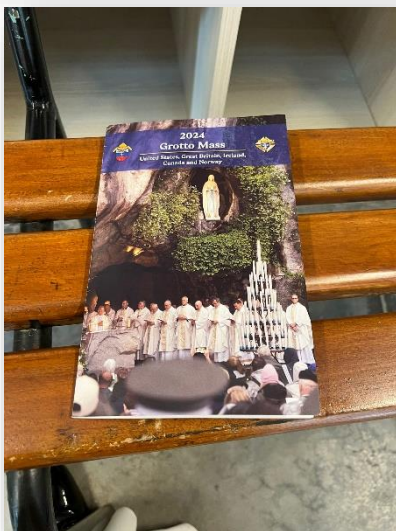
International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2024

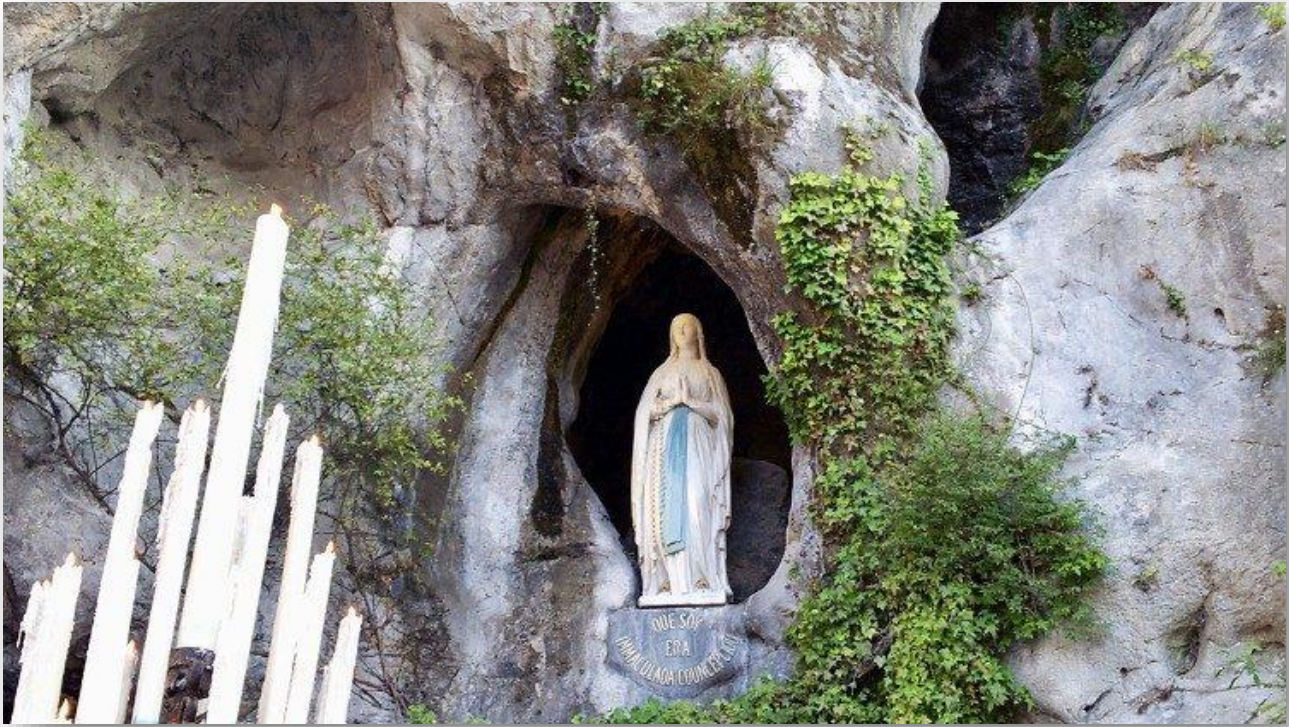


The 64th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, took place on Thursday 23rd May 2024 to Monday 27th May 2024. We hope you enjoy the following articles, reflections and photographs from those who were there.









Pope to military gathered in Lourdes: 'Be sentinels of peace'

Pope Francis addresses a message to participants in 64th International Military Pilgrimage at the French Marian shrine of Lourdes, and encourages them to bear witness to the Gospel among their comrades.

By Lisa Zengarini

"May you strengthen the certainty within you that love is stronger than hatred and division, and that you too are called to play an irreplaceable role for the common good and the service of peace in the world."

Pope Francis offered that encouragement in a message he sent to the military gathered this weekend at the French Marian Shrine of Lourdes for their 64th International Pilgrimage.

A tradition that goes back to 1958

Some 15,000 military personnel from some 40 countries are attending the three-day event on May 24-26 presided over by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations.

The pilgrimage has been taking place every year since 1958, exactly 100 years after the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes to St. Bernadette. The idea was born in 1944 in the midst of horrors of the Second World War, when members of the French army visited the site of St. Bernadette's apparitions, offering prayers for peace.

A spiritual journey

In his message, signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, Pope Francis invited participants to undertake a spiritual journey on the footsteps of St. Bernadette "first of all towards God, but also towards our brothers and sisters, to build a more supportive and fraternal world".

This commitment, he remarked, is all the more important for the military who are called "to play an irreplaceable role for the common good and the service of peace in the world."

The world needs you in this dark moment of history

Even for those who wear a uniform, Pope Francis noted, a pilgrimage is an experience of faith that allows us to "discover the beauty of walking together, of supporting each other and of reaching out to others. It allows you to be close to your sick and wounded comrades in arms and to take care of them" and "to bring God's Mercy to the military world", he said.

"The world needs you," the Pope concluded, "especially in this dark moment in our history. We need men and women of faith capable of putting their weapons at the service of peace and fraternity."

Reflections on IMP 2024 by Monsignor Phelim Rowland Army Chaplain 1986 - 2006



I last attended the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2005 just before my retirement from the Army. It was a prominent event in the annual calendar. In those days a train from Germany brought the BAOR element and the rest of the pilgrims came from the UK. We worked very closely with the German Military Chaplaincy but it still demanded a huge amount of organisation and logistics. It was a different world in which the 'Iron Curtain' was still well and truly up.

I was very conscious when I was invited to attend the IMP 2024 that veterans tend to speak of the past. The past to the young is of no great interest but of course, the past shapes the future. I still tried very hard to avoid saying 'when I was.....' The faces of the young soldiers, sailors, air-men and women look no different. The uniforms were marginally changed, more beards but the spirit, enthusiasm and comradeship were the same as ever. I watched 350 service men and women march proudly through Lourdes for the various events of the pilgrimage, ably led by our band. I once heard the IMP referred to as Religion with marching! Both require attention to detail and commitment.

Faith in God and Jesus Christ is the thread that pervades the Pilgrimage. The invitation to be there comes from the Blessed Virgin Mary. All that is required of the pilgrims is openness of mind and heart as to how God speaks to us. I spoke to no one who did not share the joy of the event. Joy is truly a gift from God.

I was so happy to have attended with some of my fellow veteran Chaplains. The kindness of today's Chaplains was very much to the fore. The same organisation and logistics required of past Pilgrimages was evident. All the veterans would agree that it was wonderful not having to organise anything!

I cannot conclude these random thoughts without mentioning the other veterans who stayed in Hosanna House and graced the Pilgrimage. I caught a glimpse of a Military Cross and wondered what the story behind it might be. Such decorations always come at a cost.

We also had the huge privilege of being in the company of a young man who lost his sight as a result of an IED in Iraq being ably led by his wife.

I suspect I will not return to the IMP because of age. That does not matter. The spirit still goes on. Many future generations will relish all it has to offer. I thank God for whoever it was who had the idea to bring the French and German armed forces to Lourdes in 1958 as an act of reconciliation after two world wars. It was a God inspired idea!

Reflections on IMP 2024 by Deacon John Power

Serving Army Chaplain



I have never been to Lourdes before although, I have had opportunities to attend with the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the HCPT (Hosanna House and Children's Pilgrimage). It has always been a regret and especially so leading up to the International Military Pilgrimage. It was with some trepidation that I joined this pilgrimage feeling that it may not be the prayerful pilgrimage that I may encounter; I was wrong.

I think the first thing that struck me about Lourdes is it's setting in the Pyrenees, we had good weather and blue skies and to look from my room window or to set off marching to the Grotto surrounded by lush green mountains, some topped with snow, cannot fail to raise one's spirits.

I had made a personal commitment on this pilgrimage to leave something behind in Lourdes and that was that pain of grief. I lost my younger brother suddenly two years ago and the pain associated with that loss and the impact of supporting those left behind has been a cross to bear. It was almost fortuitous when we gathered at the Hemicycle on the first evening of the pilgrimage, Bishop Paul said that during this time together we should consider leaving something painful in Lourdes and asking God to give us the strength and courage to do so. It would be my prayer for this pilgrimage.

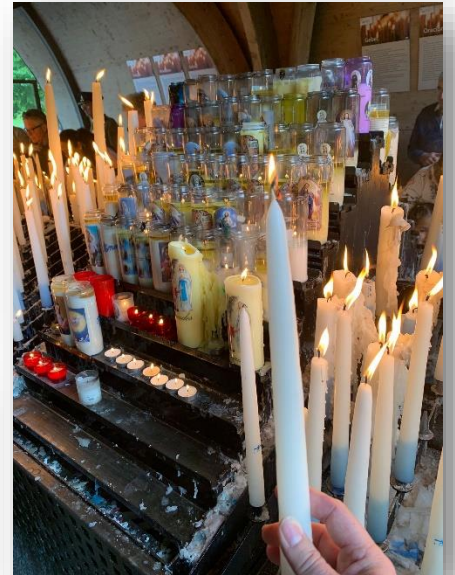


A real highlight of the pilgrimage for me as a Chaplain was being asked by Fr. Ian Stevenson to lead the CCF contingent from St. John Henry Newman College at the Stations of the Cross. As we progressed through the Upper Stations, we moved quickly away from the crowds of pilgrims and found ourselves with time to contemplate the three times that Jesus fell. I reflected with the young people that the story of our lives can be about falling and getting up. We had to be people who prayed for courage and strength in the darkest of times and to make that commitment to go again and that Jesus gives us the perfect example of this. In His darkest hour, in pain, broken and bereft - he got up to carry His Cross and go again.

I asked the pupils to share their thoughts about the three times Jesus fell. One young man said that he noticed three things when looking at the stations. The first time Jesus fell, He fell on to one knee, the second time He had fallen on two knees and the third time He had 'face planted the ground' because he was almost beaten. He then went on to say that there are times in his own life when he feels like that - beaten and wants to give up. I was then considering how I could respond appropriately until he said that what keeps him going in his life is the Veronicas and Simons of Cyrene. Those people who listen to him and help him: parents, teachers and mentors.

His thoughts were a revelation for me. He had uncovered a real truth at the heart of Christ's Passion: of enduring the difficulties that may come our way. For me, in my personal intention of this pilgrimage, he moved me to a place of recognising all of those people who had helped me in my journey through the pain of grief. It enabled me at the 14th station to leave, as best I could, that pain at the foot of Our Lord's Cross. For the first time I was able to say thank you to God for his healing and comfort that he had provided me through the Veronicas and Simons of Cyrene in these last two years.

As I left the young people, feeling much lighter that I really had left something of the pain of loss and the foot of the cross a little pang of guilt hit me. I felt I had moved along the path of healing of grieving for my brother. His name was Michael, so as I wandered through the streets I bought a statue of St. Michael the Archangel as a reminder of him, of this pilgrimage and of the Grace of God that I had so tangibly felt during these scared and holy few days.



Reflections on IMP 2024 by Cadets at Saint John Henry Newman Catholic College, Oldham



Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop of the Forces with Cadets from Saint John Henry Newman Catholic College, Oldham

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 the stream. This was my second year at Lourdes, and I am still so amazed by everything that has happened. Hearing the different nations and communicating with them. It has also strengthened me as a catholic with the special connection through church.

Hayden Lindley:

Lourdes has been a very sentimental and mesmerising experience. The atmosphere 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 band were fantastic, and it was so mesmerising to march to. The overall experience was very memorable and the connection between all the cadets was amazing. It certainly lived up to last year.

James Murphy:

This is my second time taking part in the IMP, and for the 64th anniversary once again it amazes me. Spiritually in Lourdes, I'm always caught by the masses we attend and how the messages are always able to connect to me in a way. Also, I am grateful for all the effort gone into arranging the entire week for this to happen. Another thing that catches my eye is all the diverse culture meeting different soldiers from Germany, France, Italy are just a few of the nations we met people from and interacted with. Overall if you are given the chance to visit Lourdes, in my opinion I would take it as it can be a once in a lifetime experience.

Cael O'Brien-Thomas:

I found Lourdes a calming environment and the unity as all the different nations and countries got together under one common goal and were united under Christianity. Also getting to hear from and learn about the different soldiers' backgrounds and the history of Lourdes itself.

Poppy Tattersall:

I have gained a lot from the 64th IMP, I have had time to strengthen and consolidate my faith and relationship with God and it has given me a defining sense of passion for pursuing a future career in the military, the sense of spirit, comradery and strive for achievement is something that I would like to surround myself with permanently in the future. I know that a career in the forces will require hard work, but with the interactions I have in Lourdes, I will be equipped with more advice than I could have gained anywhere else, and I will have these interactions to thank for my success. Even if things go sideways in the future, I will always remember what the priest said in mass about letting God take me on his path rather than being the director, cast and script writer of my own life. Also, learning to allow myself to fall more than once like Jesus did in his passion while, also seeking for help. I am incredibly grateful for this experience and have gained opportunities and advice I could not have got anywhere else in the world.



1. St Peter, the first Pope, was martyred by the Romans. How was he killed?
2. Who was the second Pope?
3. What was Alexander VI called before he became Pope?
4. When was Gregory XII elected Pope?
5. Which Pope initiated the Second Vatican Council?
6. Where was Pope Francis born?
7. Why did Pope Benedict XVI say he decided to retire?
8. Pope Linus issued which adornment decree about women?
9. What colour shoes does the Pope traditionally wear?
10. Pope John Paul II was Polish but the majority of popes have been Italian. Before his election, how many years had the papacy been held by an Italian?
11. What document was given to the Pope that gave him temporal power over Rome?
12. Which 19th Century Pope led the Church for over 31 years?
13. Legend has it that a woman was Pope during the Middle Ages. What was her name?
14. Who was the only British Pope?
15. What year was he elected?

Answers to Newsletter Issue 30 will be published in Issue 31 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com

Answers to Newsletter Issue 29: 1. 22 Mar - 25 Apr, 2. Eggs, 3. Simnel, 4. Chile, 5. 1878, 6. Poland, 7. Effigies of Judas, 8. Pysanka, 9. Eastre, 10. Ukraine, 11. Witches, 12. Peter.

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.

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? The Bishopric of the Forces is offering 4 opportunities to go on a retreat in 2024. The retreats are open to all MOD personnel (Regular, Reserve and Civil Servant); immediate dependants will be considered dependent upon the availability of places. Applications from junior ranks are particularly encouraged.

For 2024, Douai Abbey in Berkshire, Worth Abbey in West Sussex, and Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire



DOUAI ABBEY 23 - 28 JUN 24



WORTH ABBEY 14 - 17 OCT 24



AMPLEFORTH ABBEY 11 - 14 Nov 24

The retreats are aimed at all levels of faith and knowledge, age groups, backgrounds, ranks and experiences. They will allow participants to challenge their preconceptions in a relaxed and non-judgmental environment. All venues offer a unique opportunity to take a fresh look at faith away from the pressures of everyday service life. The retreats aim to promote and foster spiritual and moral values from a faith perspective thus contributing to professional and personal development as well as serving to strengthen the moral component of the application of military force.

Further details can be found on the Defence Instructions and Notices: DIN 2022DIN01-013
Alternatively, please contact to register your interest or to receive further information:

Wg Cdr (Retd) Jem Wynne, Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain. Tel: 07834609153 Email: Jeremy.Wynne109@mod.gov.uk



Key Dates in May & June

Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Feast) – 31st May

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
(Solemnity) – 2nd June

The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
(Solemnity) – 7th June

The Nativity of John the Baptist
(Solemnity) – 24th June

Ss Peter & Paul, Apostles
(Solemnity) – 30th 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 Assistant (PA) to PRCC(A) at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com