



# RAF ROMAN CATHOLIC

## ADVENT 2020 UPDATE



“Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man.”  
– Pope Francis

Welcome to the Advent 2020 update for the RAF Roman Catholic Community. As we enter the season of Advent, which coincides with an easing of COVID lockdown as well as some promising news regarding potential effective vaccines, we look towards the horizon with hope, a hope founded on the word of God made flesh. I wish you all a blessed Advent – a time for us to prepare for the coming of Jesus –and, when that great moment in history arrives, a very happy and holy Christmas.

**Rev (Sqn Ldr) Deacon Dave Skillen, RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain**

## ...Events...Events...Events...Events...

### Bishopric of the Forces Retreats 2021

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? Scripture gives us many examples of our Lord Jesus withdrawing from noise and bustle to pray and to gain respite (Mark 3:7, Luke 5:16). There is the opportunity to find that same peace at one of the 4 Bishopric of the Forces Retreats planned for 2021:

**Douai Abbey, Berkshire (9-12 Mar 21) Belmont Abbey, Hereford (21-24 Jun 21)**  
**Worth Abbey, Sussex (4-7 Oct 21) Ampleforth Abbey, N. Yorkshire (29 Nov-2 Dec 21)**

Look out for more details on the Defence Homepage or at DIN Reference 2020DIN01-124. To express an interest, contact either [Jake.McAllister390@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Jake.McAllister390@mod.gov.uk) or [Caroline.Routledge475@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Caroline.Routledge475@mod.gov.uk).



### Organ Music for Advent and Christmas

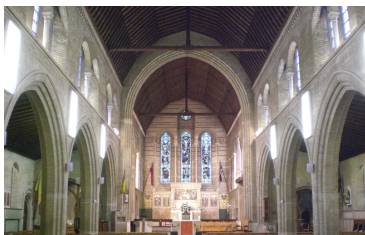
If you are missing the opportunity to attend community carol services this Advent check out an on-line concert from [Westminster Cathedral](#) Fri 4 Dec at 1900.



### RAF Annual Masses

A new initiative for 2021 is our plan to hold 2 Annual Masses for the RAF RC Community and interested friends across defence. These will provide an opportunity for those from the whole RAF RC family to gather together to worship and share in the Eucharist in the presence of Bishop Paul Mason, the RC Bishop to the Forces, and the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain alongside his Chaplains and the faithful.

- **1100, Sun 18 Apr 2021** at the Cathedral Church of St Michael & St George, Aldershot
- **Thu 21 Oct 2021** at the Central Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes, London (time TBC)



### Chrism Mass – 1200 Tue 23 March 2021 – RC Cathedral of St Michael & St George, Aldershot

The annual Chrism Mass brings together the Bishop, priests, deacons and lay people of the Armed Forces to celebrate the blessing of the oils of catechumens, chrism, and the sick. Mass will start at 1200. To register your interest, contact the Bishop’s Secretary at [Diane.restall654@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Diane.restall654@mod.gov.uk).

### Independent Faith Engagement Review: Call for Evidence

The Government is seeking views from the public, and from experts in the field, on their engagement with faith organisations: these views will help underpin this review’s findings and recommendations. For more information please visit this [link](#).

**The on-line form is open until 11 Dec 20.**



## Lourdes Pilgrimages

It is with sadness that the global pandemic has caused the cancellation of the **International Military Pilgrimage (IMP)** which had been due to take place in Lourdes next May. We hope and pray that this great gathering of the military family will, once again, take place in 2022.

The **HCPT Easter Pilgrimage** is supported by many loyal and committed military personnel and, regrettably, this has also had to be cancelled in 2021. The HCPT organisers are investigating options to arrange a pilgrimage later in the year. More details in the next newsletter.



## On-line Spiritual Resource



We have all had to adapt to a 'new normal', making more use of remote working, on-line conferences, and streamed Masses and worship. In 2021, the RAF PRCC will be rolling out the opportunity to attend an on-line **Bible study course** offered by [Ascension Press](#) called '**Unlocking the Mystery of The Bible**'. This excellent course shows how the 14 narrative books of the Bible tells the complete story of our salvation from Adam and Eve to Christ and the Church. More details to follow.

Ascension Press are also offering a free '**The Bible in a Year**' **podcast** starting on 1 Jan 2021. If you've struggled to read The Bible, this podcast is for you. What a great way to start the new year!

## Focus on the new Pastoral Administrative Assistant to the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain – Wg Cdr (Rtd) Jem Wynne

An exciting new role was created this year to offer administrative support to the RAF Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain in his mission to further the advancement of the Roman Catholic faith among members of the RAF and the welfare of Roman Catholics in the RAF.

Wg Cdr (Rtd) Jem Wynne took up this part time role in September which coincided with his retiring from the RAF after serving 27 years as a Dental Officer. Jem is well known to the RAF RC Community having served with the RAF Pastoral Advisory Group since its inception, latterly as its Chair. He was instrumental in organising the first of the RAF led Retreats which have proved to be so successful over the years.

Jem and his wife, Emma, and their children, Thomas and Polly, have settled in Newcastle upon Tyne and worship at their local Parish of Holy Name. He is keen to pursue the opportunities in delivering catechesis having recently completed the Certificate in Catholic Religious Studies. Jem is very excited about his new role, 'I left the RAF after 27 very happy years but I am grateful for an opportunity to contemplate the true meaning of life, to simplify its demands, and to refashion my attitudes and lifestyle. Taking up this new role at this time and in being able to dedicate myself in service to the Church has been serendipitous. I feel the influence of the Holy Spirit keenly.'



## And finally

If you would like to know more about Catholic life in the RAF, or wish to be added to our database and receive updates about RAF Roman Catholic life, IMP, HCPT etc, get in touch with Jem at [RAFPRCCPastoralAssistant457@outlook.com](mailto:RAFPRCCPastoralAssistant457@outlook.com). To contact the RAF PRCC, Padre Dave Skillen, to say hello, request prayers, or to know more about Catholic life in the RAF use [David.skillen100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:David.skillen100@mod.gov.uk).

To read the Advent Pastoral Letter from Bishop Paul Mason, check out, also, the revamped [website of The RC Bishop of the Forces](#).