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"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" 2 Corinthians 9:15



Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



Welcome

From

*The Revd. Fr. Stephen Sharkey CF
Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (Army)*



Welcome to Issue 34 of the Army Roman Catholic Newsletter.

As we continue our journey during this joyful season of Advent, let us remember that Christmas is more than lights and gifts, it is a time to open our hearts to the profound mystery of God made flesh. Christ's birth in Bethlehem is a celebration of God's deep love and desire to live among us, bringing hope, peace, and redemption to our lives. As we gather with family and friends, let us embrace the spirit of giving and compassion, reaching out to those in need and nurturing the love of Christ in our communities. May this season be filled with grace, and may we prepare our hearts for the joy of Christ's coming.

Wishing you a blessed and joyful Christmas!

The First One Hundred Days in the role of PRCC(A)

by Fr. Stephen Sharkey



The old saying that time flies when you are enjoying yourself can loosely be used when it comes to my first 100 days as Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (PRCC). It seems to have been endless Bank Forms and 100 attempts to hopefully finally get there, those who know me know that Administration is not my strongest attribute. What has been very enjoyable is being able to visit all the Roman Catholic Military communities in Northern Ireland, Catterick, Cyprus, Salisbury Plain and of course the training establishments in Pirbright and Sandhurst, all have made me feel very welcome and supported. It has also been good to visit our Chaplains, I have managed to see most of them and hope to catch up with the others ASAP.

I was also very sad to hear of the death of our long serving Organist Felicity Belsey, she was in the parishes in Salisbury Plain when I started as a Chaplain 16 years ago, she will be greatly missed by the parish as she was not just the organist, she was a great friend to many over the years, may she rest in peace!

I am also delighted that we have a new brother Priest in the Bishopric, Father Terkura started with the 1st Battalion the Mercian Regiment in Bulford after his training and Commissioning Parade in the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. On behalf of his brother priests and of the Bishopric I would like to welcome him and wish him well.

It has been 100 days as PRCC and 5930 days since I drove through the gates of Amport House to start my journey in the Army, I'd better not blink, or I'll soon be welcoming the next PRCC!

Reflection on Remembrance



Each year, on Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, we come together to honour the courage and sacrifices made by countless men and women in the pursuit of peace and freedom. Remembrance Day is more than a day to commemorate past wars; it is a moment to acknowledge the bravery of veterans, remember those who gave their lives and reflect on the enduring impact of their service on our communities and future generations.

Many of our Military Chaplains have experienced and faced conflict on duty as they supported troops in intense, high risk environments whilst grappling with the emotional toll of war. They must balance their role as spiritual caregivers with the harsh realities of combat, witnessing trauma firsthand and still providing comfort amidst danger.

Fr. Stephen Sharkey shares some photographs from OP HERRICK 19 as he reflects on his time in Afghanistan and those he ministered to.



Remembrance is always a busy time for our Chaplains. Please see the following photos and words and see our Chaplains in action over this reflective period.

The Cathedral of the Forces St Michael & St George, Aldershot



Solemn Mass of Remembrance Sunday at Westminster Cathedral

*Principal Celebrant:
Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster
Assisted by Deacon John Power*



The photo shows Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Deacon John and his wife, Sharon with members of the Army who attended the Mass.



Deacon John Power writes:

On Remembrance Sunday, I had the privilege of assisting at Mass and preaching in Westminster Cathedral. The Mass was for The Fallen and the principal celebrant was Cardinal Nichols. The Cathedral was packed and many serving and veteran communities were represented in great numbers. The Gospel of the day was about the Poor Widow, who gave the equivalent of a penny; all she had to the treasury. I remarked about how this passage can be interpreted as something to do with us giving away all that we financially have. In the homily I spoke about Jesus seeing beyond the small if not negligible donation of the widow for the upkeep of the temple. He sees what is in her heart: her generosity and love. It was an appropriate Gospel account for Remembrance Sunday, a day when we remember and give thanks to God for those many people who either gave their lives out of love and generosity and for those who bare the physical and psychological scars of battle today.



Kenya

"We Will Remember them"

Fr. Kevin Dow, Chaplain to 2 RIFLES was privileged to conduct a Remembrance Service on Remembrance Sunday in Nyati Barracks, the main base for BATUK (British Army Training Unit Kenya) for those members of the 2 RIFLES Battlegroup, Task Force Hannibal - i.e. the 'enemy' (Scots Guards) and the CSS (REME) elements on camp.



Oakham, East Midlands

“We Will Remember them”

Fr Volodymyr Sampara delivered the homily and gave the blessing at All Saints Anglican Church in Oakham on Remembrance Sunday.



Cottesmore

A service for Remembrance Day, Monday, 11th November 2024 at 1050 hrs. Fr. Volodymyr, Chaplain 2 Royal Anglian, Kendrew Barracks.



Fr. Vlody is seen here with his Commanding Officer, Lt Col Jeff Bennett-Madge and fellow officers.



Armistice Day

39 Engr Regt - Kinloss

Armistice Day service on 11th November at Kinloss, was led by the PRCC(A) Fr. Stephen Sharkey who is temporarily covering as Chaplain to 39 Engineer Regiment in Scotland.

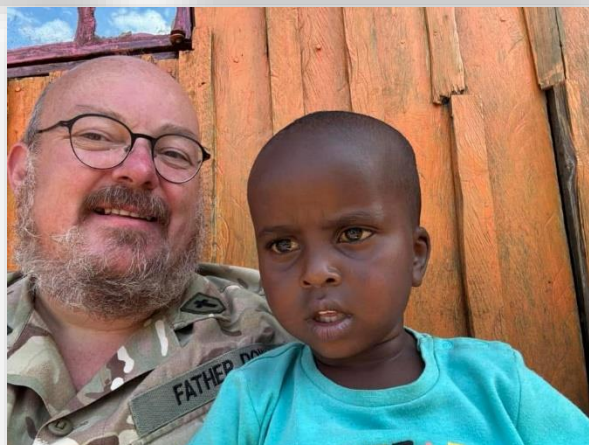


Ministry in Motion

Father Kevin Dow has recently returned from being on exercise with his Battalion, 2 Rifles in Kenya. During his time in Kenya he and some of the soldiers deployed have been spending some time successfully engaging with the local community, visiting schools and distributing sanitary products to the girls, giving donations to various orphanages, a home for young mothers (aged between 9 and 14 years old), and a school hostel, where secondary pupils from across the country stay whilst studying at the local secondary schools.



Fr. Kevin with Emmanuel, who fell asleep in his arms and was determined not to let Father go!





During the main of the main FTX, Fr. Kevin was based in A2, and was able to attend some of the local Catholic Parishes in town. St. Therese's on the Equator parish, also has a couple of boarding schools in their compound, and so to see over 600 children leading the signing at the Mass was a wonder to behold. With an estimated 44% of the Kenyan population thought to be Catholic, and around 75% of the locally employed civilians (LEC) estimated to be Catholic, the local parishes were pleased to welcome a Catholic Priest from BATUK (one of the major employers in the area) for the first time.



For five Sundays, Fr. Kevin celebrated Mass at Christ the King parish, which has a 0700 hrs Mass in English. After one Sunday of preaching whilst the local priest presided, Fr. Kevin was then given free reign and ended up presiding and preaching for the following four Sundays at this Mass, and was a great experience. On several of the Sundays there, Fr. Kevin also concelebrated at the 2nd and 3rd Sunday Masses - in Swahili! It was easy enough to follow the liturgy in Swahili, but when it came to say the part of the Eucharistic Prayer, it was said in English!

The 1st Sunday of Advent was Fr. Kevin's last Mass in the parish and he was asked to preach in English at the 1st Mass, and half Swahili-half English at the 2nd Mass and was saved by the visit of the retired Archbishop to having to preach again at the 3rd Mass.

There certainly was a few firsts for Fr. Kevin... Getting a live chicken handed to his as part of the presentation of the gifts, along with toilet rolls, bedding, crockery and lots of trays of eggs and bananas - makes a change from a collection basket!

During the 2nd Mass of the 1st Sunday of Advent, members of the local Interior Defence Force came to receive a blessing, and so after Communion they came forward with their 'tools of the trade' to be blessed. Fr. Anthony the associate priest who was presiding asked Fr. Kevin to do this blessing as he felt that he would be more at home... what was presented for blessing included a riot shield and helmet, body armour, uniforms, truncheon, and at least a dozen pistols!



Mass at the Stadium of Christ the King, Nanyuki

Honorary Colonel - Bear Grylls Visits Army Foundation College Harrogate 26th November 2024



The Roman Catholic Chaplain at the Army Foundation College Harrogate, Fr. David Burke met with Honorary Colonel Bear Grylls who was visiting Junior Soldiers from across the college, speaking on teamwork, resilience and a never give up attitude to training!



St Eligius Day - Kinsloss

PRCC(A) Leads a Service to Celebrate St Eligius, the Patron Saint of Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers - 1st December

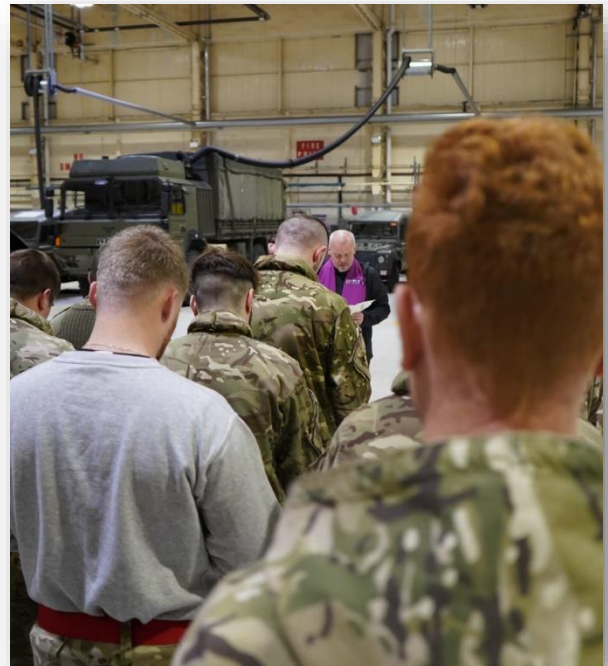


Saint Eligius or Eloy 588-659 (†665)

Eligius, born near Limoges in the late sixth century, was in his childhood so skilled in manual arts, that his father decided to place him as an apprentice under a silversmith of Limoges. In a few years he had no rival in the art of metalworking. His piety and virtues recommended him still more highly than his talents; his frankness, prudence, gentleness and charity were admired by all. The King of France, Clotaire II, heard of his excellent craftsmanship and sent for him, commanding him to make a golden throne adorned with jewels. For that purpose the King provided a large quantity of gold and precious stones, and with the materials given him Eligius made not one, but two magnificent thrones. Struck by the craftsman's rare honesty and ability, as well as by the overpowering beauty of his work, the King appointed him Royal Goldsmith for his Kingdom, and kept him in his palace. Until then, the Saint had liked luxurious surroundings, but now, touched by a particular grace, he began to live in the midst of riches as a poor disciple of Jesus Christ. His greatest pleasure was to make beautiful reliquaries for the Saints. But best of all he loved the poor, and the treasures which passed from his hands into those of the indigent could scarcely be counted. When strangers asked to see him, they were told to go to a certain street and stop at the house in front of which a crowd of beggars was waiting; that would be his house. He would wash their feet, serve them with his own hands, take the last place at table, and eat only their leftovers. When Saint Eligius had no more money, he would give away his furnishings and his very cincture, his cloak and shoes.



Saint Eligius was finally obliged to accept a nomination to the Episcopal see of Noyon. His life as a Bishop was the continuation of his good works. He possessed the gift of miracles; he cast out demons and cured the sick by a simple word or the touch of his hand. He died in 659, regretted by all. The Saint shares a wide patronage including all Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.



St Joan of Arc Catterick Garrison



St. Joan of Arc Catholic Garrison Memorial Church celebrated its 95th Anniversary this year and also another significant event in the life of this Christian community took place. Mrs Maureen Cadman who has been a member of the congregation for over 40 years was awarded the Benemerenti Medal by Pope Francis. The Medal is awarded for long and sustained service to the Roman Catholic Church and the local Catholic Community. Padre John Power who has been the Administrator at St. Joan of Arc for the last three years remarked that, "Maureen is a most deserving recipient of this prestigious award. I came to the church three years ago and if it was not for Maureen's presence, organisation and generally giving my a kick, I personally would have been lost!"

On Sunday 6th October, Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop to His Majesty's Armed Forces celebrated Mass at St. Joan of Arc and awarded Maureen with the medal on behalf of Pope Francis. The Mass was celebrated with many parishioners, some returning after many years of moving away. Her family also attended on masse, travelling as far and wide as Hong Kong and the USA. After the Mass it was Maureen's turn to be on the receiving end of the hospitality that she so often organises for others who visit the church. We enjoyed a beautiful buffet prepared by her family and friends.





The Benemerenti medal, began as an award for soldiers in the papal army in the 18th century. Today, members of the Swiss Guard, the papal protection force, can receive it after three years of faithful service. For a member of the laity to receive it, letters of petition must go through the local bishop and papal nuncio, and the process can take more than a year.



PQO COURSE – ARMY RC CHAPLAIN SEP – NOV '24



The passing out parade for Commissioning Short Course 243 took place at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) on Saturday 23rd November 2024. Fr. Terkura Igbe is our newest Chaplain to Commission and complete training. Many congratulations and prayers go with him for his future ministry within the military. Fr. Terkura has kindly provided an account of his journey that has brought him to becoming an Army Chaplain.

HIDDEN STEPS – CCS, 28TH SEPTEMBER – 23RD NOVEMBER 2024

My name is Terkura Igbe. I was born in Makurdi, the capital city of Benue State in Nigeria. I was born into a very Catholic family. My parents, Thaddeus Aosu Igbe (late) and Dinah Anwosu Igbe were very keen on bringing up the children in the Catholic faith. I was privileged to have catholic education. This was very helpful because my love for the Catholic Church became so strong over the years.



In 1995, I was admitted into the Holy Ghost Fathers and Brothers Religious Order (The Spiritans). My initial training was in Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria for the Postulancy. In August 1995, I began my Novitiate, for a year's intensive spiritual journey and made my first religious profession on 8 September 1996 at Holy Spirit Parish Bantama, Kumasi - Ghana. Later in the same year, I began my studies at the Spiritan Institute of Philosophy (SIP) at Ejisu in Ghana.

I was sent to Dakar - Senegal for my perfecting (pastoral year) where I had a mission of studying and learning the French language at l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop and then in July 2000, I worked in refugee camps in the southern part of the Republic of Guinea. The initial formation culminated in my ordination in 2005 and since then I worked in the Republic of Guinea till 2015 when I arrived in the UK for missionary work.

In life we sometimes take very bold and open steps. Within the margins, there are often hidden steps that only manifest at the appropriate time. Sometimes, the various experiences, contexts and challenges are key influencers to seize the opportunities at the appropriate time which is deeply rooted in the Divine. If I had taken bold steps to leave my dreams to study medicine in order to embrace the Catholic priesthood as a missionary, the hidden steps were to manifest and unfold many years after my ordination - the desire to embrace a new vocation as an Army Chaplain!



Since I arrived in the UK in 2015, my ministry has been between parish and chaplaincies, mostly in schools, and hospitals. In the last twelve months, I worked at Heathrow Airport as a chaplain - a completely new experience for me. Between the school and the airport chaplaincies, I worked as a project manager in Bickley, Bromley, Kent. This was perhaps one of the trying periods in my priestly ministry because I did not find the 'raison d'être' of my missionary calling this ministry. The area of operation was so limited to me.

In the midst of this challenge, I deeply felt the resurgence of my retrospective desire of embracing a possible vocation as a military chaplain. The journey began in May 2023 with various consultations with the appropriate authority. I had a conversation with Bishop Paul McAleenan, the Area Bishop of Hertfordshire and Fr. Ugo, my Religious Superior who gave me their blessing to make an enquiry with the Army. I had series of interesting telephone calls and emails from Fr. Ian Stevenson, then Principal RC Chaplain. I also received emails from Bishop Paul Mason, the Bishop of the Forces. In September 2023 after a 'Teams interview and a listening session with Bishop Paul Mason and Fr. Ian Stevenson, Bishop Paul Mason granted me the permission to begin the application process.

With my application successful, and the AOSB, I began my journey at Shrivenham on 23rd September and at Sandhurst on 28th September 2024 for my basic military training. Sandhurst is an interesting place to be. I see this place as a 'country' where the OCdts either walk or march. I arrived at Sandhurst with zero Army knowledge so I had to learn in a very hard way. I struggled with the intensity of map reading and the combat estimate but with great determination and hard work, I scaled through. The directing staff were so good and I admired their patience and kindness to organise some catch up sessions for me and all those who were struggling in certain courses. Padres Afful, Collins and Pritchard were also very helpful to me, especially having had previous military experiences.

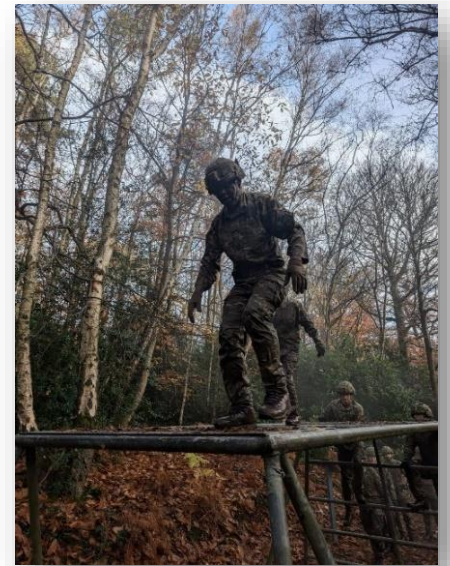


At Sandhurst, I was assigned to Platoon 39 which was quite a mixed group with doctors, physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, psychiatrists and chaplains. The nature of the platoon meant there was a lot of competition to excel and perhaps win awards. This could be quite normal with people from other professions, though I found it quite strange.



My time at Sandhurst was an opportunity to journey with everyone and to seek to be impactful especially to all those who were passing through the challenges of strenuous mental and physical exercises.

The field exercises in Barossa Ranges and Hankley common were quite challenging. The terrains are rough, sandy, muddy, water-logged, hilly and sometimes full of thorny hedges and bushes. The most nights I spent during the field exercises were four nights at



Hankley common. In all the four nights, I only had six hours thirty minutes sleep. The nature of the activities meant that we had early starts of activities from 0300 to about 0130. There were periods where I had to go on regular STAG (sentry duty) and the occasional harsh weather and lack of proper sleep in the field made this so tough and sometimes unbearable. As the eight-weeks CCS 243 drew closer to the end, I saw a bit of light at the end of the tunnel. I had the last field exercise at Barossa Ranges and what a heart-felt joy to have moments of photographs as a Platoon and also as a Company - the Dettingen Company as we were called.

The commissioning ceremony was on 23 November 2024 at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. It was such a great day for me, especially as I looked back at the journey so far. The joy of the passing out parade at Old College and the slow march up to the Old College steps made a huge difference.

The current Principal RC Chaplain, Fr. Stephen Sharkey was present and so was my brigade chaplain, the Revd Catherine Gillham. Also, the Revd Ruth Bottoms, the Head of the Heathrow Multi-Faith Chaplaincy also graced the occasion. All these presences meant so much to me. I also had friends and former parishioners from Birmingham, Watford, South Norwood, Hounslow and Heathrow airport were also present to support me and also to accompany me with their prayers. A new life has now begun in this new vocation as an Army chaplain. God has passed through a lot of people to help me on my journey. I am grateful to all those who have supported me morally and materially - my family back in Nigeria and friends in the UK.



I enjoyed every bit of my training and the various opportunities that my religious order gave me. This is more of the joy of the hidden steps in a dream come true as seen in the success of being accepted in the Royal Army.



Felicity Belsey RIP

Organist at St Patrick's RC Church, Tidworth



Felicity Belsey, was the organist at St. Patrick's Church, Tidworth as well as many other churches on Salisbury Plain for many years. Sadly, she passed away on the morning of Friday 25th October, her funeral service was held at St Patrick's on Friday 8th November.

Fr. Michael Fava writes:

She was a lovely lady, but I really cannot claim to know anything very much about her life outside the context of her accompaniment for us in the churches at Tidworth and Bulford. She clearly held this responsibility for many years as her time as organist pre-dated my first stint on the Plain beginning in 1999. She was still there during my second posting (2010-2013), and for my final years in Upavon and Andover from 2015- 2020. I additionally saw Felicity periodically when conducting funerals at Salisbury Crematorium where she was one of the regular duty organists. I will remember her as unfailingly gentle, loyal, and cooperative - always flexible and ready to meet the needs of any special occasion on the calendar. She was not a Catholic herself, but an Anglican, yet had developed a real understanding of our liturgy and the subtleties of our Church calendar. Amazingly, she somehow also managed to play in her own local parish church whenever possible!

My fondest memory of Felicity is really my last - my final Mass at Our Lady's in Bulford when departing the Army in late October 2020. I had long made my fondness known to both congregations for the television series of G.K. Chesterton's 'Father Brown', and encouraged others to watch it. The previous year I had even been lucky enough to visit location filming of the series in the Cotswolds at the invitation of an officer in my HQ who is a life-long friend of Mark Williams who plays Father Brown. We spent a fascinating day together with Mark, observing the filming. As I concluded my final Mass and Felicity struck up the theme music to Father Brown on the organ, having researched the composition by Debbie Wiseman! It was typically a measure of her thoughtfulness and kindness, and I cherish the happy memory.

The Salisbury Plain Catholic community, and a great many chaplains, owe Felicity a huge debt of gratitude over many years. May her good and gentle soul rest in the peace of heaven where she undoubtedly accompanies the heavenly choirs with her skill and dexterity. RIP.

Fr. PJ, who celebrated the funeral Mass, said; "We gave her a great send off, the church was full and her family - two daughters and a son were very happy. We celebrated, during the service, her love of lambs and her collection of ducks." He also added that she was just a very humble lady who was dedicated to her church music and gave so much to St. Patrick's.

St Patrick's church community had a picture done for her before she passed away as a thank you. The church community and family are considering having it hung in the church to celebrate Felicity's love of playing there. Privately, she helped so many people in many other ways.



Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.



A walk through the Christmas Season

By Michael R. Heinlein (Editor of Simply Catholic)

The Church's liturgical season of Christmas is one of its shortest, but also one of its most unique. Within it is the eight-day celebration of the Lord's Nativity — known as the Christmas octave — as well as other feasts pertaining to the manifestation that Jesus is Lord of the nations. And there are feasts of several saints, many of whose stories contain special significance to the season.

The configuration of the calendar relative to the season of Christmas is a bit complex. It always begins on the solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord — Dec. 25 — and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, a movable feast roughly three weeks after Christmas.

Christmas Day:



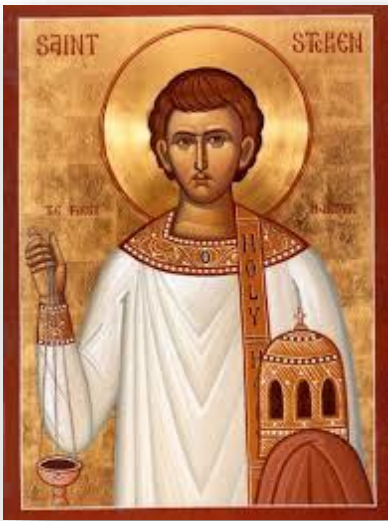
The liturgical celebration of the Lord's Nativity has many variables and components. There are four particular timeframes during which Mass might be celebrated in observance of this great feast: a vigil, a Mass at night, a Mass at dawn and a Mass during the day. Each of these Masses have their own unique prayers and readings. The newness of life made possible because of the Incarnation pervades the prayers and feasts of the Christmas season.

The four different Gospel readings assigned for use at the different Masses of Christmas all speak of the variety of the people affected by the Saviour's coming. The beginning of St. Matthew's Gospel (see Mt 1:1-25), which lists Jesus' family lineage, is proclaimed at the Vigil Mass. This includes major figures of Judaism like Abraham and David, whose covenants with God foreshadow the new and everlasting covenant that will be sealed in the blood of Christ. But Christ's lineage also emphasises that he came to save the poor and lowly, shown by connecting him to ancestors of low degree, socially or morally — like the four women mentioned, including David's mistress Bathsheba. Jesus came to save them all.

The Gospel read at the Mass at night (see Lk 2:1-14) also underscores the importance of Christ's coming for the marginalised and outcast, embodied by the news of his birth being shared firstly with the shepherds and not the rulers endowed with earthly power, who might be perceived as entitled to receiving such news on behalf of their subjects.

It is important to note that on Christmas, the faithful all are to genuflect or kneel during the Creed at the words relative to this central mystery of Christian faith, "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man." This helps us keep our hearts and minds focused on what the feast is all about. As the popular Christmas carol "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" phrases it, Jesus was "born that man no more may die; born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. ..."

26 Dec, Feast of St. Stephen:



Within the octave are various feast days that have rich histories and traditions. It is interesting to note that the first feast day after Christmas — the very next day, Dec. 26 — is the feast of a martyr. Recalling the purpose for which Christ came and the assignment of his divine mission, Christians are reminded, at this early stage of the celebrations of the Christmas season, of the Lord's exhortation that anyone who wishes to follow after him must take up his cross. St. Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian faith, is held up as a living witness of what it means to proclaim that Christ is saviour without counting the cost.

27 Dec, Feast of St. John:

Dec. 27 is the feast of the apostle and evangelist St. John. Regarded as the disciple closest to Jesus, St. John — believed to be the author of a Gospel, the Book of Revelation and three New Testament letters — is the one who teaches us that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). Because St. John's Gospel alone includes the miracle at the Cana wedding feast, when Jesus miraculously changes water into wine, this feast has long been associated with the blessing of wine.



Day 28, Feast of the Holy Innocents:



The Holy Innocents celebrated on Dec. 28 were martyrs killed as the result of Herod's murderous rage, resulting in his desire to eliminate any threats to his power by killing anyone who fit the profile of the newborn king he learned about from the Magi (see Mt 2:13-18). Taking no chances for the babe's survival, he ordered the murder of all boys in or around Bethlehem under the age of 2. Christ, of course, survives thanks to the heavenly intervention manifested by the angelic admonition to St. Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus in the middle of the night to Egypt. The Gospel proclaimed on this day, referenced above, evokes two major issues about which the Church is concerned today: immigration and abortion.

Feast of the Holy Family:

Many of the few details we know of Jesus' early life relates to his familial relationships. As a young man, we know he grew in the ways of faith as the obedient son of Mary and Joseph. The Church holds up annually the Holy Family of Nazareth as a model for all families, as a model for all human relationships. As Blessed Pope Paul VI said during a visit to the Holy Family's town in 1964, "Nazareth is the school in which we begin to understand the life of Jesus. It is the school of the Gospel." The feast of the Holy Family is celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas, except for the years when Christmas falls on a Sunday. Then it is celebrated on Dec. 30.





1 Jan, Solemnity of Mary:

The octave of Christmas ends with the celebration of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God on 1 Jan. It is a holy day of obligation. 1 Jan. also marks the Church's commemoration of the World Day of Peace, first observed 50 years ago in 1968. It seems appropriate and fitting to be celebrated on a Marian feast day, for peace is only possible through total self-sacrifice and surrender — through total love and obedience to the will of God, of which Mary is an icon for the Church.

It bears noting that 1 Jan. previously had been known as the feast of the circumcision of the Lord, because Jewish ritual prescribes that Jewish males would have been circumcised on the eighth day after birth, in accordance with the covenant God made with Abraham. As a member of a pious, practicing Jewish family, Jesus would have received this ritual induction into the Abrahamic covenant (see Lk 2:21).

Solemnity of the Epiphany:

Traditionally celebrated on Jan. 6, the Twelfth Day of Christmas, is the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. In commemoration of Christ's manifestation to the Magi — who represent how Christ came to save all mankind, not just the Jews — this feast celebrates how Christ's identity is revealed, as is summed up in the gifts the Three Kings presented him. The gold and frankincense they gave Christ represent his status as king of the universe, the deity worthy of our true worship. And the myrrh tells of the bitter reality that the babe in the manger was born to die.

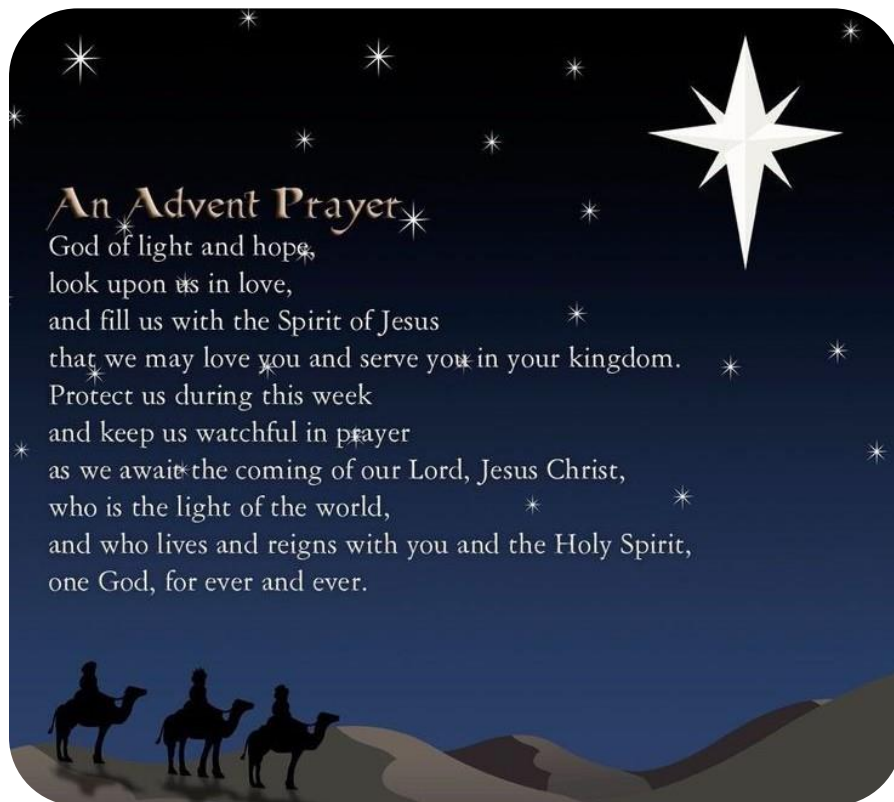


The Baptism of the Lord:



The Christmas season ends with the feast of the Lord's baptism, which falls on the Sunday after the Epiphany. (That is, unless the Epiphany falls on Jan. 7 or 8, when it then is celebrated on the following day, a Monday.) This feast commemorates the day on which Christ formally accepts his mission as the redeemer when he receives St. John the Baptist's baptism of conversion and repentance. He sets out from the waters of the Jordan, identified as God's own son by the Father's voice that resounded from the opened sky, and inaugurates his saving work as the long-awaited Messiah who will free us of our sins.

Reference: <https://www.simplycatholic.com/a-walk-through-the-christmas-season/>



A graphic with a light blue background featuring snowflakes and evergreen trees. The word "Christmas" is written in a large, red, 3D-style font at the top, and the word "Quiz" is written in a similar red, 3D-style font below it.

1. What does the word Advent mean?
2. What day does Advent start for Catholics?
3. What are the four themes of Advent?
4. What do the colours of the candles represent on an Advent wreath?
5. What word can you not say during Advent?
6. What is the last ornament German families traditionally hang on their Christmas Tree?
7. What is on the Christmas menu for many people in South Africa?
8. What were the names of the Magi?
9. What date is Epiphany?
10. What does the word Epiphany mean?
11. Who made Christmas trees fashionable in the UK?
12. What was the first Christmas song played in space?
13. What is the most recorded Christmas song in history?
14. How many towns in America are called 'Christmas'?
15. True or false: Santa Claus is based on a real person.

Answers to Newsletter Issue 34 will be published in Issue 35 or email Karen at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com

Answers to Newsletter Issue 33: 1. Moses, 2. Abram, 3. Pisgah, 4. Moriah, 5. Euphrates, 6. Elijah, 7. North, 8. Rebekah, 9. Turkey, 10. Philippi.

New for 2025 - Army RC Newsletter

Letters to the Editor



Dear Readers,

We are excited to introduce a new section in future issues of the newsletter: '***Letters to the Editor.***'

This is your space to share thoughts, reflections, questions, and experiences related to your faith journey and our shared spiritual community.

Do you have a testimony of how God has worked in your life recently? A response to something you've read in the newsletter? Or perhaps a question or idea you'd like us to explore together? We sincerely invite you to participate by writing to us.

Your voices matter. Together, we can grow deeper in faith, encourage one another, and foster meaningful conversations within our community. Let's make this a place where hearts are uplifted and God's love is shared.

Please send your letters to: armyrcpaa21@gmail.com and we may include them in upcoming publications.

We look forward to hearing from you!



Chrism Mass

Wednesday 16th April 2025 at 1200 hrs

The annual Chrism Mass brings together the Bishop, Priests and Deacons and Lay People of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force to celebrate the blessing of the oils of Catechumens, Chrism and the Sick. The Chaplains will renew their priestly vows and commitment in front of the people.

Further details can be obtained from:

Mrs Diane Restall, Tel: 01252 348234 or Email: Dianerestall654@mod.gov.uk

Event >>>

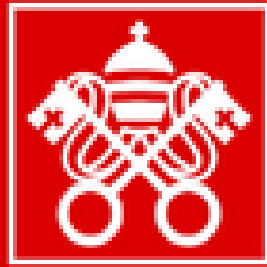
65th International Military Pilgrimage Lourdes 2025



The UK Contingent will depart for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Thursday 15th May 2025, returning Monday 19th May 2025.

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 Tangney Tours, Pilgrim House, Station Road, Borough Green, Kent TN15 8AF.
Tel: 01732 886666



VATICAN
NEWS

Vatican News is the portal for Vatican information where you can find the latest news on Pope Francis, the Holy See, the Church in the world, and international news.

Please follow the link to access the site: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en.html>



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.



Key Dates in December & January

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Solemnity) – *9th December*

3rd Sunday of Advent – *15th December*

4th Sunday of Advent – *22nd December*

The Nativity of the Lord
(Solemnity) – *25th December*

St Stephen, the first Martyr (Feast) – *26th December*

St John, Apostle, Evangelist (Feast) – *27th December*

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
(Feast) – *28th December*

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph
(Feast) – *29th December*

Mary, the Holy Mother of God
(Solemnity) – *1st January*

The Epiphany of the Lord (Solemnity) - *5th January*

Baptism of the Lord (Feast) – *12th January*

The Conversion of St. Paul, Apostle
(Feast) *25th January*

The Presentation of the Lord
(Solemnity) *2nd February*

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