

# Serving Faithfully

Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force  
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**From the Vicar General Monsignor Peter O'Keefe AM VG EV**

## Military Gathering at the Vatican

Catholic Bishops to National Defence Forces and other civil support services with senior Chaplains were invited to the Vatican in October to take part in a Congress regarding the Formation of Catholic Military Ordinaries in aspects of Humanitarian Law.

This initiative was launched several years ago following the engagement of the Holy See with the United Nations, Red Cross and Red Crescent to assist in the formation of Military Bishops in aspects of Humanitarian Law, in the promotion of human dignity and an understanding of law in armed conflicts.

This gathering centred on the role of the Bishop and his military chaplains in assisting their respective National Defence Forces in the prevention of violations of Humanitarian Law with respect to the wounded and war dead, war crimes, genocide, vulnerable civilians and prisoners of war. This year's gathering focussed particularly on the current reality: the application of Humanitarian Law with respect to Non-State armed groups fighting within States and across State boundaries.

As part of the program, there was a Audience with the Holy Father on Monday 26 October 2015. The Holy Father addressed the gathering and met with all participants. A summary of Pope Francis' address is in the following article. These gatherings not only impart valuable information but strengthen the bonds of fraternity and cooperation between various Military Dioceses across the world. This was a very positive occasion.



### Chaplains must assist military traumatized by war, says Pope

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VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- As more members of the armed forces endure both physical and emotional scars from conflicts raging around the world, Pope Francis called on military chaplains to tend to their wounds with the healing balm of the sacraments.

"At this time, in which we are living a 'third world war fought in pieces,' you are called to nourish the spiritual and ethical dimensions of members of the military and their families, which will help them to face the difficulties and the often lacerating questions inherent in this unique service to their homeland and to humanity," the pope said Oct. 27.

Military chaplains and some heads of military dioceses ... were in Rome for a course on chaplains and international humanitarian law, which was sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

War disfigures the bond between nations, the pope said, leaving "an indelible mark" in soldiers and anyone who witnesses the atrocities of conflict. Members of the military and their families "require specific pastoral care, a solicitude that will make them feel the maternal closeness of the church."

"The role of the military chaplain is to accompany and support them in their journey, being for all of them a consoling and fraternal presence," he said. "You can pour on the wounds of these persons the balm of the word of God, which relieves pain and infuses hope; and you can offer them the grace of the Eucharist and of reconciliation, which nourishes and regenerates the afflicted soul.

"Regarding the conference's emphasis on humanitarian law, the pope stressed that the law needs to be further developed to address "the new reality of war," which uses deadlier instruments to "inflict atrocious and useless suffering on combatants and particularly grave damage to the natural and cultural environment.

"Most of all, though, Pope Francis said, Christians are called to work toward ending war and to building bridges that unite rather than walls that separate. An essential task for chaplains is to pray, the pope said. "Without prayer one cannot do all that humanity, the church and God ask of you at this time. Ask your chaplains, ask yourselves: 'How much time during the day do I dedicate to prayer?' The answer will do everyone good."

## A Christmas Message To be Healers of Wounds and Warmers of Hearts



We often are perhaps surprised by the plain language and simple imagery Pope Francis uses to illustrate his messages. He offered a startling interview to a magazine in Italy in 2013, which has been translated into many languages since, – a very beautiful and very

challenging image for an understanding of the role of the Church in today's world.

***'I see the Church,' he said 'as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds ... And you have to start from the ground up'. The pope also adds in the same interview that 'the thing the Church most needs today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful. It (the Church) needs nearness, proximity.'***

This imagery is very meaningful to us in a military context but it also contains a sublime message for all of us this Christmas.

I would like to suggest that the best gift we can give to others, both family and friends, is the healing of wounds and the warming of hearts. We live in a beautiful world but it is a world, and a society, that is deeply wounded. We carry some of those wounds in our hearts and, even more tragically, we can be the cause of pain and suffering for others, even those we love the most.

***Sometimes it is in our own families that wounds most need healing and hearts most need warming.***

Christmas is a special time for family and friends when we remember that God has come near to us in Jesus. Why? Precisely to heal our wounds and warm our hearts with love. The giving of gifts at Christmas can be both a sign and a practical way of bringing warmth and healing into people's lives. The gifts can be just superficial or an expression of something deeper. It is what lies in our hearts rather than what lies under the wrapping paper that really matters. These gifts can express and symbolise that we wish to be 'healers of wounds and warmers of hearts' not just at Christmas but every day of the year.

I join with our Chaplains in wishing you every joy and peace this Christmas and we pray for you, remembering you in our Christmas masses. May this Christmas 2015 be a time of deep happiness, contentment with family and friends and an expression of great hope for 2016.

On behalf of the Military Diocese, I thank you for your generous support given throughout this year.



*Pope Francis greeting Monsignor O'Keefe at the October gathering of bishops of National Defence Forces in Rome*

### RETIREMENT OF MAJGEN PETER PHILLIPS AS CHAIR OF THE DIOCESAN FINANCE COUNCIL

We have been most fortunate to have had MAJGEN Peter Phillips AO MC (Ret'd) KCSG as both a Member and Chair of the Military Diocese Finance Council since 2005.

MAJGEN Peter has had a most distinguished career in the Australian Army, serving in Vietnam as Commanding Officer of Delta Company 3RAR at Coral-Balmoral and was awarded the Military Cross in August 1968. He has contributed significantly to the Veteran community serving as National President of the Returned and Services League (RSL) and in his advocacy for Defence Families. He continues to support both our Defence community and civil community.

Peter is a man of deep faith and Christian service who continues to support our Church through his involvement with the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn, the Military Diocese and at parish level. On 22 March 2010 his service to the Church was recognised with the conferral of the Papal Order of Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great at St Paul's Catholic Chapel, Royal Military College, Duntroon by the Military Ordinary.

The Finance Council within the Military Diocese takes on an advisory capacity broader than the oversight of the Diocese's financial management. It's membership comprises currently serving ADF and retired members along with civilian members and supports the Military Diocese in providing advice

both financial and pastoral. MAJGEN Peter will continue to serve on the Council.

The Military Diocese thanks MAJGEN Peter for his commitment to it and for his wise counsel over many years. We value his service and his on-going care for this Diocese and our Catholic Diocesan family. We express our thanks to Ros, Peter's wife for her great support to him.



### NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY ORDINARIATE FINANCE COUNCIL

BRIG Allan Hodges AM (Ret'd) has accepted the responsibility of Chair of the Diocesan Finance Council from December 2015. Alan has been a member of the Council since 2007 and assists the Diocese in many forums with his expertise. He is currently the editor of the Diocesan magazine 'Serving Faithfully' and is highly valued as a member of our Diocesan Family. We thank Alan for accepting this role given his many other responsibilities.

## The Church is the Door of Mercy



Pope Francis announced in March this year that the Church across the world will celebrate an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy commencing on the 8 December this year, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, and concluding on 20 November 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.

The Pope has stated that we can never over indulge on mercy for it is at the very foundation of the Church's life and in all aspects of human love.

The Church is called in all its pastoral activity to make present the tenderness of Jesus Christ. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love, the love of Christ to all peoples.

'We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is the wellspring of joy, serenity and peace. Our salvation depends on it.' the Pope said

The motto for this year, *Merciful like the Father*, serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of God who asks us not to judge but to offer love and forgiveness instead. As we move through the Year, different themes on aspects of living mercy will be explored in every diocese across the world. It surely will be an extraordinary year of renewal and therefore grace for those who follow the pilgrimage of mercy.

### Pope Francis' Prayer for the Year of Mercy

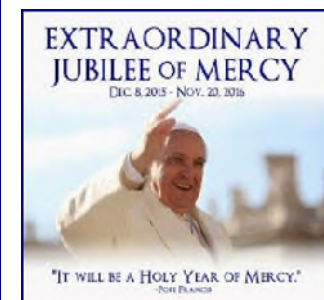
Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: 'If you knew the gift of God!'

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.



You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

### Donations

The main source of income of the Catholic Military Diocese has traditionally come from donations from supporters through this newsletter, the Knights of the Southern Cross and from contributions from salary of our chaplains. Unfortunately, this has been insufficient to support the education of chaplains and meet the running costs of the diocese. With the support of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, dioceses throughout Australia have been asked to assist where they can. We gratefully acknowledge the following generous donations:

Armidale	\$2,000	Bathurst	\$4,395
Brisbane	\$20,000	Lismore	\$5,000
Maitland-Newcastle	\$20,000	Melbourne	\$12,400
Rockhampton	\$5,000	Sandhurst	\$5,000
Wagga Wagga	\$6,000	Wollongong	\$5,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$84,795</b>		

### A gift in your Will

Making a gift to the Catholic Military Ordinariate is a meaningful way to fund the education of future priests and deacons and to support our clergy in providing spiritual guidance to our service men and women and their families.

To make a bequest, you should consult your solicitor or trustee company. It may be sufficient to make an addition or amendment to an existing will by adding a codicil.

A useful website for more information is: [includecharity.com.au](http://includecharity.com.au)

## PASTORAL CARE AT 6RAR

By Chaplain Leo ORREAL



**6 Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) is a unique battalion.**

At present there are about 580 soldiers posted to 6RAR – a number that swells to about 1000 as the battalion builds into the

Ready Battle Group (RBG) cycle. Most of the RBG are on very short notice to move, which intensifies many of their situations.

Pastoral care and support is provided for the soldiers and their families constantly on a day-to-day basis. This involves many elements from engaging with soldiers and their families as they face relationship struggles; mental health issues; managing the effects of physical injury; dealing with separation and isolation; and, struggles with discerning and clarifying values.

Clearly providing this care also extends to identifying and enhancing their relationships with God -- which includes facilitating baptisms, weddings and funerals.

From a Chaplain's perspective engaging and connecting with the chain of command, while nursing the sensitivities of the

pastoral issues at hand proved, at times, to be challenging. But working with everyone involved in a respectful, honest manner generally proved to provide the best results for everyone concerned.

Probably the most significant challenge being a chaplain at 6RAR has been the ability to be there for everyone, soldiers and their families, 24/7. Obviously the role requires the Chaplain to be present on deployments with soldiers – this year so far I was away with soldiers for 3.5 months under a hutchi – and so providing support to the families, including my own family, proved difficult at times.

A highlight of the year has been seeing the positive results of continued character training – soldiers have been far more reflective and therefore far more resilient.



## CHAPLAINS' GATHERINGS IN NOVEMBER

For the majority of the year our chaplains are posted to diverse military regions and cannot meet together. November is a special month for our chaplains as it provides two opportunities for our full time members with some reservists to come together for a Diocesan In-Service professional development and our Annual Retreat at Mittagong.

### DEACONS AND PASTORAL ASSOCIATE CHAPLAINS

Deacons Leo Orreal (Enoggera), Brenton Fry (Townsville), Garth Mayger (Melbourne) Mick Flew (Darwin), Peter Devenish-Meares (Enoggera), Pastoral Associates Kevin O'Sullivan (Amberley), Anthony Crook (Sydney) and Cesar Lopez (Melbourne) came together at the Chancery in Canberra for two days designed to support the deacons and pastoral associate chaplains. These members gave several presentations relating to their roles as deacons and pastoral associates. Mons Peter O'Keefe, Stuart Hall and Glynn Murphy were present at the this gathering.

### ANNUAL RETREAT

Immediately following the In-Service, the Annual Retreat took place at the Marist Brothers Mittagong concluding on 20 November. The deacons and pastoral associates gathered with the priest chaplains for this week. The priests included Mons Peter O'Keefe, Stuart Hall and Glynn Murphy together with Frs. Bryan Pipins sj (Darwin), Piotr Kowalczyk (Townsville), Damian Styles (Brisbane), Stephane Sarazin (Williamtown), Thi Lam (Sydney) Damian Ellis (Canberra), Joel Vegara (Wagga) and Paul Stuart (Victoria), Bob Hayes (Sydney) and James McCarthy (Sydney).



The five days of the retreat allows for spiritual refreshment, a Military Ordinariate meeting and social interaction which all assist in on-going formation and the growth of the chaplain fraternity. These days were very successful and much appreciated.

### APPRECIATION

The Diocese would like to thank the Knights of the Southern Cross for supporting these activities through their annual appeal for the training and on-going formation of our chaplains.

# “SOLDIERING BEGINS HERE”

the Catholic Community—Kapooka  
by Father John Joel Vergara



The sign “Soldiering Begins Here” on the main road inside the Kapooka Military Area welcomes the Recruits on their enlistment at the 1<sup>st</sup> Recruit Training Battalion. It aptly reminds them about the transformation they will go through: ‘they will arrive as civilians and they will march-out as soldiers!’ The basic training to become qualified soldiers of the Australian Army can be both exciting and fulfilling, as much as it can be daunting and challenging.

Training at 1 RTB is based on an eleven-week program for the regular Army Recruits, while reservist Recruits have a five-week program. Their training is designed to inculcate the knowledge, skills and Army values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork, required by all soldiers of the Army. Skills and subjects taught in Kapooka include shooting, weapon handling, navigation, radio, first aid, physical fitness, drill, character guidance and development, among others.



Military environment imposes discipline, constant supervision and continual assessment, and it can be very stressful to the Recruits, regardless of age, maturity and experience. A normal day in Kapooka involves a lot of physical

activity and mental concentration. ‘A day feels like a week, and a week feels like a month!’ is a common saying here. Feelings of self-doubt, homesickness and separation anxiety from their families are common experiences among the Recruits.

The Soldiers Chapel is a great blessing for the Recruits; it serves not only as a power house of prayer, but also, as a place of refuge for the ‘tired and weary’ away from the Lines. There are three chapels within the Soldiers Chapel, representing the Catholic, Protestant and Anglican denominations. They equally share the spiritual and pastoral support to the Recruits, staff and their families, through the ministry of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments. A multi-faith room is also available for members who belong to non-Christian religions.



St. Francis Xavier is the patron saint of the Catholic chapel. There are two Masses each Sunday, which are celebrated in sync with other chapel services. It’s very overwhelming to see the Recruits actively participate and sing during the Mass. At Mass, Recruits somehow forget, if only temporarily, the amount of stress and pressure that they have on them. They are refreshed, blessed and empowered by God, through Jesus, who always comes to sustain our needs.



Please include in your prayers our Army Recruits.

## Reporting a Unique Ship’s Position

In a book that reprinted a range of unusual letters to the Editor of *The Times* of England, this one from a retired naval officer was first published in 1978.

“Some years ago I was bringing a Destroyer home from the Far East and was required to report my position twice a day. One evening I saw we would be passing close to where the Greenwich Meridian cuts the Equator in the South Atlantic Ocean to the south of Ghana in Africa so I arranged to arrive there dead on midnight. Once there I altered course to due North and stopped engines so my position signal read:

**At 0001 my position Latitude 00° 00’ N, Longitude 00° 00’ E. Course 000°. Speed 0k.**

I had considered saying I was nowhere but thought (probably correctly) that their Lordships at the Admiralty would not be amused.”

# The Christmas Tree and its Meaning

By Group Captain J. Pratt

John Guy's *A Gentleman's Journey* Blog attracts the reader's attention through its pertinence to the changing world in which we find ourselves today. In December last he comments on seeing a Christmas display fashioned not from a living tree but from dead branches, a sight that jarred him and took him back to his early childhood in Denmark when his Grandmother introduced him to Christmas during the long, cold bleak winters. She pointed out that during their winters, the days were very, very short and the nights were very, very long and that for over two thousand years, the Danes have paused in the midst of darkness and cold at Christmas to celebrate light, love and togetherness.

To do this they cut down the only green living object outside, a fir tree, set it in the middle of the room, adorn it with candles for light and colourful baskets of tasty sweets and celebrate love by joining hands in a circle and dancing around the tree while singing old songs and hymns. That joyful vision sticks in his mind to contrast with sighting the dead tree limbs when Australian greenery could so easily have been found to put life into what is meant to be a joyful scene.

Today the tree seems to have overshadowed the idea of the Christmas crib that St Francis of Assisi played such a big part in encouraging Christians to celebrate Jesus' birth. In 1223 he had just returned to Greccio from Rome where the Pope had approved his Rule and was eager for his followers and congregation to call to memory the little Child born in a stable in Bethlehem watched by an oxen and an ass.

He recalled having seen in Rome in the Basilica of St Mary Major, a small oratory built as early as the fifth century and fashioned like the cave in Bethlehem. Only

the Child was there lying in the hay on the manger with the two animals: this was where Francis was struck with the awesome humility of the Incarnation.

After his death in 1226, the custom of displaying a crib at Christmas spread through Europe and later Cribbs were endowed with additions such as Mary and Joseph, shepherds and the Magi and eventually, the Christmas tree!

With February's approach comes the time to carefully pack away the Crib for 2015 as well as those Christmas cards received last year. The Christmas tree, a segment of conifer not now as green as in December, is also discarded.

Recently journalist Dennis Shanahan described Italy's Christmas Crib – *the Presepio* – an 800 year-old tradition descending from high art down to a simple display lacking wasteful and space-consuming trees. As an alternative to the Christmas tree this is now becoming popular in Australia.

The Holy Family is central in the *Presepio*, starting with the Crib's opening on December 8 until the feast of the Epiphany on January 6 when the kings arrive with their gifts. Of course the manger has no occupant until Christmas Eve when the **Infant** appears in the prime position! The Shanahan family's tree-less *Presepio* includes many additional figures embodying local traditions, shepherds and sheep, and tradesmen, all acquired from thirty years of visits to Italy. Today's apartments and smaller homes with less space might find the *Presepio* a welcome switch from the current practice of the tree.

## *Serving Faithfully*

is a newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force.

It is published quarterly by the Catholic Military Ordinariate of the Australian Defence Force.

The Diocese is composed of members of the Australian Defence Force and their families wherever they may be serving.

Its people are scattered widely across Australia and overseas.

*Serving Faithfully* aims to be a means of sharing events and experiences from across the whole Diocese.

Articles are welcome to be submitted for publication and should be addressed to

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*Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Catholic Military Ordinariate*



# A LEGACY STORY

This article comes with permission from the August newsletter *Chatterbox* published by the Brisbane Water NSW Legacy Club at Gosford NSW

## MY STORY as a sister of a current Australian Defence Force member

It was a sunny afternoon and I was watching the graduates of No 08/14 Initial Officers Course perform their Graduation Parade, at the Royal Australian Air Force Officers Training School in Sale, Victoria.

The graduates commenced their march across the parade ground, towards family and friends gathered under the grandstand. Hearing the instructions given to the graduates from the Flight Commanders during the march was intriguing. Next minute, I hear this booming voice coming from a familiar figure – my brother. My brother, Pilot Officer Matthew Brougham, was one of two Flight Commanders on that day.

I cannot describe the feeling of hearing his voice, the confidence in his voice, the professional and astute attitude that had now become a natural quality in my brother.

Later during the Graduation Parade, the Reviewing Officer, Group Captain Geoffrey Kimmins, CSC, OAM, presented the awards for the No 08/14 Initial Officers Course. The last award title was read out “Leadership and Military Qualities Award”, followed by the words “Pilot Officer Matthew Brougham”. The excitement that I felt, the proud moment of hearing his name was overwhelming. Now, I am not one to show my emotions, however, I felt a few drops of water forming in my eyes, and my heart just burst with happiness and love for my brother.

Matthew Brougham was born in 1981 in Australia. Growing up, Matt and I had a typical brother/sister relationship however we were always there for other each, and today, remain close despite the distance between our homes.

In 2005, he decided to join the Royal Australian Air Force. As much as I would, and will always support him with his decisions, I was also concerned. In 2009 Matt was deployed to Afghanistan. During those months whilst on deployment, my concern for his safety was always in my mind, however, my thoughts were also for his, then fiancé, Katrina.

Prior to his deployment, Matt and I spoke about the ‘what ifs’, and from my knowledge and experience of working with Legacy, I made him aware of what the Department of Veteran Affairs and Legacy did, and where Legacy could assist Katrina if the unthinkable happened.

In 2010 Matt returned to Australia, and he was later awarded the “Airman of the Year Award”. This was

presented to him officially by Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Geoff Brown AO. In April 2011, Matt and Katrina married in a beautiful ceremony in Berrima. Later in 2012 Matt was redeployed to return to Afghanistan to serve a further 8 month period, returning to Australia in 2013.

In October 2013, Matt and Katrina welcomed a gorgeous baby boy Danian.

And this brings me back to Sale, Victoria, with my nephew Danian sitting in my lap, watching his daddy undertaking his duties on the grounds.

Matt decided to further his studies, and as part of his further studies, he undertook the Initial Officers Course. After relocating to Canberra in January of this year, he will now undertake a four year degree in Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). Upon completion of his studies, he will complete his Honours Degree in Electrical Engineering. His ultimate goal is to achieve a higher rank of Wing Commander in the Air Force.

I am so proud of my little brother who has worked so hard to achieve his goals. I have watched his confidence grow immensely. He is still his normal, goofy and lovable self. Watching him grow over the past 30 odd years has been an amazing journey, as he has gone from an adolescent teenager, into a grown, confident husband and father.

I am also proud and admire Katrina for her unwavering love and support for Matt. Katrina is a beautiful soul, for whom I have known for many many years. Katrina has been a pillar of strength throughout his career, and especially during Matt’s deployment overseas.

Working alongside ex-service personnel and our widows has made me more aware of how our wars and peacekeeping efforts have contributed to people’s lives. And I cannot tell you in words of how proud I am of everyone associated with service and closer to home, my brother being one of those servicemen and women who are part of the ADF today.

## Heather Wilby (nee Brougham)

*Heather is the Executive Support and Team Leader Village at Brisbane Water NSW Legacy Club at Gosford, NSW. This article comes with permission from their August newsletter Chatterbox and is a story that breaths love, loyalty and service and we are indebted to Heather for allowing the reader to share something of profound value.*



HELP KEEP THE FAITH  
IN THE FORCES -  
PRAY IT IN

## VOCATIONS PRAYER CAMPAIGN

Creator God,  
Life is your gift to me.

Through Baptism  
you invite me to grow  
into a very real, full and loving  
person,  
and to share the gift of my life in  
service to others.

Be with me  
as I choose each day  
to show your presence  
in our world.

Give me  
the courage and generosity to  
respond to  
Your love, Your call.

I pray especially  
for those who serve you  
as Priests, Deacons, Brothers and  
Sisters.  
Keep them close to you.

Open the minds and hearts of many  
others,  
to accept the challenge  
to build Your Kingdom. Amen.

Mary, Help of Christians  
Pray for us



*[All members of the Diocesan family  
are encouraged to pray this each day.]*

## CHAPLAIN KEVIN O'SULLIVAN INSTITUTED INTO MINISTRY OF LECTOR

On Friday 20 November during the Mass for the conclusion of the recent Diocesan Retreat, RAAF Chaplain Kevin O'Sullivan was instituted into the Ministry of Lector.



Chaplain O'Sullivan is currently posted to RAAF Base Amberley. Before becoming a Chaplain in 2011 he had prior service of 19 years service in the RAAF. Starting as a Communications Operator in 1988, Chaplain Kevin finished up as a Warrant Officer (WOFF) before being accepted into Chaplaincy via the in-service programme for ADF Chaplains and was appointed as a Pastoral Associate.

Chaplain Kevin explains that his motivation for joining the Air Force stemmed from his maternal Grandfather who had been a Prisoner of War for nearly five years after the fall of Crete in WW11. His paternal uncle, who also served in the Army, had been seriously wounded in Vietnam and left the Army as an Infantry RSM after more than twenty years.

His journey to become a RAAF Chaplain has seen Kevin complete a Bachelor of Theology followed by a two year placement in a Catholic parish in Melbourne. During this time, he also completed a Masters of Art in Pastoral Care and an advanced three month Clinical Pastoral Education placement at the Alfred Hospital, working in Trauma and Allergy, and Intensive Care.

"I love being part of the RAAF family; it's what I know and where I can add value in being there for our people so they can be there for others in the way that the organisation needs them to be," adds Chaplain Kevin.

"The Chaplain Branch is vibrant and fervent, where every Chaplain can excel in their ministry in service of their God for the benefit of Air Force," said Chaplain Kevin.

"Air Force Chaplains are ministers and pastors who are immersed in a dynamic community, living the same sort of lifestyle as other Air Force personnel and their families."

"Most, if not all, of my engagements with people are stand-out and privileged moments; however recently I had the opportunity to be deployed as the Chaplain to Operation Harwick (the recovery and repatriation of the human remains from the MH17 air disaster) with a focus on the air operations out of Eindhoven Airbase in the Netherlands," said Chaplain Kevin. "Another highlight in my RAAF Chaplain career was when I participated in the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Program as part of Exercise Balikatan in the Philippines working predominantly with the US and Philippines Armed Forces." "Both were real-time deployments involving two very unique environments and the people experiences I had were profound and rewarding; I learnt so much about myself and my role as a Chaplain."

"They share in the ups and downs of people's lives and sometimes Air Force ministry means sharing our faith. Most clearly, a Chaplain is a visible God person." Chaplain Kevin is currently preparing for another stage in his religious journey – ordination as a Deacon.

A self-confessed home body, Kevin's diverse and busy career is balanced by the love and support from his wife Denise and a teenage son Aaron, and a very playful spoodle puppy, Zeb. His thirst for knowledge and information is fulfilled through his enjoyment of reading and listening to programs or searching the web. Life is never dull in the O'Sullivan household.