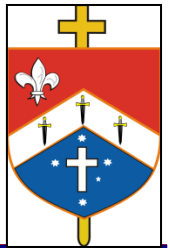


Serving Faithfully

Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Military Services
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LTCOL Barham Ferguson has given permission for his touching poems to be reproduced. These reflect on Anzac Day and service of leaders and chaplains in the ADF.

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Read also the background of LT Owen Geddes, who is currently studying for a Bachelor of Theology as part of his preparation to become a chaplain.

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MAJ Gavin Keating provides a scholarly article on the influences of culture and religion in relation to our approach to Anzac.

THE RISING SUN AND THE TRUMPET CALL US TO NEW LIFE



forces stationed in London marched through the city and held a memorial service in Westminster Abbey on the first anniversary of the landing and Easter Day in 1916 was on the 23rd April. I was also recently reflecting that Anzac Day rarely falls on a Sunday, and that is the day of the Lord's Resurrection, but it does this year. In any event, the day of observance falls within the extended days of celebrating Easter every year.

Our Catholic tradition, coming as it does from Sacred Scripture, contains a marvellous truth of faith that gives us the assurance that we remain close to those who have gone before us into eternal life. An important part of that tradition means that we can rely on the prayers of those who have gone before us and that our prayers for them influence the achievement of their eternal happiness. This is not a tradition that is held by all. Of course, it is important that, as a society, we remember, reflect and honour those who have given their all for us. And we do that in various ways through, for example, Dawn Services, Memorial Marches, and the traditional pause during the evening in most RSL Clubs. However, drawing on our tradition we people of faith have a special contribution to make. If there is anything that is keeping those who have died from their enjoying final eternal destination, we can assist them by our prayers. We pray frequently for the souls of those who have died. They are remembered in a particular way during the Eucharistic Prayer at every Mass. In addition to the Funeral Mass, often family members will request a Mass be offered at times of anniversaries of death for the repose of the souls of those they continue to love.

As St Paul reminds us 'See, I will tell you a mystery: we shall not all die, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be

raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' (1 Cor 50 – 52) St Paul gives this teaching in the context that Christ's Resurrection is the very foundation of this promise.

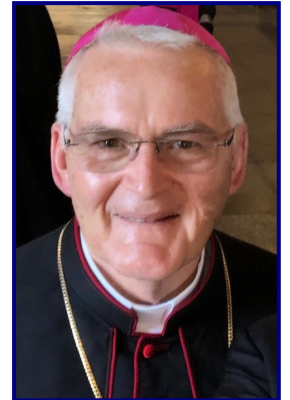
Our Anzac observance is marked by many symbols and two of the most common are the

Rising Sun badge (of the Australian Army) and the sounding of the trumpet (more accurately a bugle perhaps). For Christians especially these have special significance. The orientation of our churches traditionally face to the east – to the sunrise – because for over two thousand years that has reminded us of Christ Risen from the dead bringing new life and light to our existence. In many places, a special

effort is made to celebrate Easter Sunday Mass at sunrise. Many would agree that the Dawn Service on Anzac Day is most reflective and moving. The other 'stilling' moment is when the bugle or trumpet sounds the Last Post, followed by the minute of silence, and then the Reveille that heralds resurrection. I find it difficult to identify any other observance that links Christ's sacrifice, death and resurrection with those who have paid the supreme sacrifice in service to us.

This year especially, as we gather for our Sunday celebration of Holy Mass on Anzac Day, the whole Church has an opportunity to pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died in our service that they may enjoy the risen life that Christ has won for us.

*Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine on them.
May their souls and the souls of all the faithful
departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.
Lest we forget.*



Bishop Max Davis AM, DD
Military Ordinary

Our Catholic tradition, coming as it does from Sacred Scripture, contains a marvellous truth of faith that gives us the assurance that we remain close to those who have gone before us into eternal life.

Serving Faithfully

is a newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Military Services.

It is published quarterly by the Catholic Military Ordinariate of Australia.

The Diocese comprises 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 to
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Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Catholic Bishop of the Australian Military Services

Centenary of the Royal Australian Air Force

Wing Commander (Dr) Mary Anne Whiting



The ANZAC legend inspired by the bloody campaigns of World War I has become an important part of shaping Australia's views of the past and the future.

This period of separation from each other - away from our traditional gathering places - provides us with an opportunity to think about the many actions and battles throughout the history

of Australia's Military Service, and to remember the debt we owe to the generations who came before us. We can also draw some connections and parallels from our past history and our current situation.

When Britain created the Royal Flying Corps in April 1912, with a Military Aviation Corps and Naval Wing (later the Royal Naval Air Service), the Australian Army was already recruiting 'mechanists and aviators' for a Central Flying School.

By March 1914, and with five aircraft purchased from Britain, test-flying began at Point Cook. Captain Henry Petre and Lieutenant Eric Harrison were selected as instructors, together with four mechanics, Chester, Fonteneau, Heath and Shortland, and appointed to the new Central Flying School. By July, No 1 Flight of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) was ready to commence flying training.

The outbreak of War in August 1914 meant the existence of the new flying training school at Point Cook, Victoria, made it possible to contemplate the reality of air operations. On 18 August 1914 instructional flights began. The first Australian soldier under instruction was Lieutenant George Merz.

On 8 February 1915, the Australian Government received a request from the Viceroy of India seeking aviators, aeroplanes and motor transport to help in a campaign in the Tigris Valley against the Turks. An agreement was reached and a Half Flight was placed at the disposal of the Government of India, with men and motor transport departing Melbourne in April 1915.

On 31 May 1915, Captain Henry Petre flew the AFC's first operational flight when he conducted reconnaissance over Turkish positions at Kurna on the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers.

With the Allied cavalry patrols skirmishing on the outskirts of Kut-el-Amarh, in eastern Iraq, Lieutenant Merz, who had been retained at Point Cook as an Instructor, arrived at Basra on 13 June 1915 to join the Half Flight.

By the middle of July, the Half Flight was providing active air support with Maurice-Farman and Cauldron G III aircraft - two-seaters fitted with 80 horse power engines. These French-designed biplanes were only safe to fly after 10 am, and in the cooler air at 6,000 feet, notwithstanding the danger of their engines severely overheating when attempting to reach altitude.

On 23 July Merz and his observer, Lieutenant William Burn (New Zealand Army), arrived at the British lines outside Nasiriyah in time for an attack the next day. Departing at dawn on the 24th, their observation of enemy movements enabled the infantry to storm the weaker defences, and Merz witnessed the consequent Turkish retreat from the air.

Air crew carried no rifles or firearms, except revolvers; however, Merz had saved two, two-pound hand bombs. As both Merz and Burn emptied their revolvers into the mass of retreating troops, Merz dived so low his undercarriage knocked an officer off his horse. Diving again through a fusillade of rifle fire, Merz dropped his two-pounders from less than 20 feet.

Returning exhausted that night, rather than relax in the mess tent, Merz, a graduate of medicine from the University of Melbourne, honoured his allegiance to the Hippocratic Oath by helping the understaffed medical personnel in the hospital tent care for the many

casualties of that day's fighting.

The next day, Merz and Burn went missing on operations near Abu Salibig - Australia and New Zealand's first casualties of the air war. They did not die in vain: their air reconnaissance justified a more confident advance on Kut and pilots were issued with rifles.

In all, four Australian Flying Corps squadrons served with the British during the First World War. Of these, No 1 Squadron flew against the Turks and Germans in the Middle East, while Nos 2, 3 and 4 Squadrons served on the Western Front between September 1917 and the Armistice.

On the Western Front, the AFC was possibly the last Australian formation to go into action when Nos 2 and 4 Squadrons took to the air on 10 November 1918. Enemy trains were bombed and troops were strafed along the roads as they retreated back through Belgium towards the borders of Germany.

The AFC was disbanded at the end of the 1919, while the Central Flying School continued to operate until 1920 when the Australian Air Corps (AAC) was formed. The following year, on 31 March 1921, the AAC was separated from the Army to form the Australian Air Force. Following an endorsement by King George V in June 1921, the prefix 'Royal' was approved and came into effect on 31 August 1921. The Royal Australian Air Force has now served this Nation in peace and war for 100 years.

Down ANZAC Parade in Canberra, past the central sculpture of the RAAF Memorial with its upturned wing shapes representing the endurance, strength and courage of Air Force people, and the black granite walls on which are carved our Battle Honours, stands the Australian War Memorial. The Roll of Honour preserved and maintained within the walls of the Memorial includes the names of more than 102,890 men and women who have given their lives in the service of this Nation: 206 of them from the Australian Flying Corps; 11,191 of them from the RAAF; and 3,143 with no known grave.

During our Centenary year we honour their service and draw inspiration from their sacrifice. We remember too, with pride and gratitude, our Chaplains who have brought spiritual comfort and guidance to our servicemen and servicewomen, in times of peril and sadness, joy and celebration. Since 1926, 221 Chaplains have served in the RAAF. Currently, there are 42 Chaplains in the Permanent Air Force and 40 Reserve Chaplains, who serve at every active Base across the Nation and when required for exercises or deployments at the remote bases to our west and north.

We remember all who have served our country during conflict and crisis, and those who served, and continue to serve on the home front, for theirs is no lesser a service to Australia.

We honour them by remembering the ordinary and extraordinary deeds of the men and women who forged the history of military aviation for this Nation, in the skies above Point Cook, across our vast nation, and in campaigns across the world.

We commend their heritage to those who currently serve and those who will follow, the young men and women of this Nation, who like their forebears, will join the Royal Australian Air Force to serve their country, to honour the sacrifice of the past, and to commit to a better future for Australia and all nations.

As we did then – as we do now – and as we will – always.



*Instructors and pupils of the 1st flying training course.
Back row: R Williams; T White.
Front row: G Merz; H Petre;
E Harrison; D Manwell.*

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

Fr Edward O'Sullivan Goidanich MC

Edward O'Sullivan Goidanich was born of an Irish mother and Australian father on 18 April 1867 in Queenstown (since renamed Cobh), County Cork Ireland. He was ordained in 1891, came to Australia two years later and served in the Diocese of Ballarat.

With the outbreak of war he decided to enlist as a chaplain. On 6 May 1915, three weeks after his 48th birthday, Fr Goidanich was appointed as a Chaplain 4th Class (Captain) and allotted to the 6th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Australian Division. Shortly thereafter he embarked on *HMAT AFRIK* for Egypt before arriving in Gallipoli in the first week of September 1915.



Fr Goidanich (second left) standing with Australian soldiers, Egypt, c 1915
W A S Dunlop's album of photos, National Library

The Aleppo pine cone (pictured) was found by Sergeant Major Cunningham of the 24th Battalion while on patrol later in September. From his patrol map he believed that it was located where the original Lone Pine had stood at Gallipoli. The next morning he gave it to Fr Goidanich as a souvenir. It is now in the collection of the Australian War Memorial and is a lasting memory of a much-loved priest in his diocese and among the men he served during World War I.

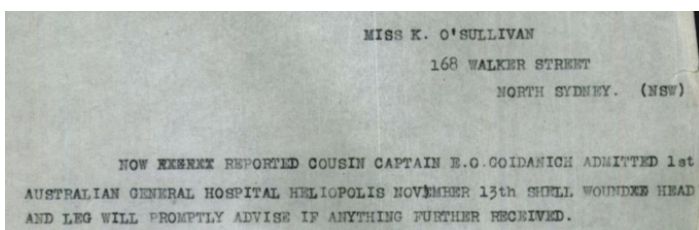


Tom Johnstone in *The Cross of Anzac* records some anecdotes about Fr Goidanich:

Under the sub heading 'Mass at Anzac' – '(He) had a narrow escape from death when he celebrated Mass in White's Gully one Sunday morning. Shortly after men had dispersed and the Chaplain had packed and moved his portable altar to his dug-out, a large shell, possibly from a notorious gun known as Beachy Bill landed in the gully. The men of the 24th Battalion regarded their escape as little short of miraculous.

'Fr Goidanich, following a visit to Imbros, returned to the battalion on Lone Pine with two cockerels. Placed just outside the CO's dugout, their crowing next morning caused great hilarity especially when answered high up on the crest by a notorious battalion character and mimic, "Kicker Kelly".

'It was inevitable that one so close to the fighting troops, and as much at risk as they, should himself become a casualty. Luckily, Fr Goidanich was "merely" wounded, recovered and was able to continue serving his brigade through the first campaign in France.' This was the advice (from National Archives Australia) to his cousin as a result of his being wounded on 8 November 1915:



On the Western Front Johnstone records, 'Before going into action at Pozieres ... practically every Catholic in the two brigades (5th and 6th) received the sacraments before going into the line. Fr Goidanich considered it was the best day's work he had ever done.'

In September 1916 Fr Goidanich was recommended for the Military Cross for distinguished service in the field. This was awarded on 1 January 1917. The Commonwealth Gazette of 29 June 1917 formally lists the award, which he received 'For consistent good work throughout the operations of the 6th Australian Infantry Brigade in France from 26 March 1916 onwards. Also at ANZAC.'

The appreciation of Fr Goidanich's service is clear from a letter in the Ballarat Diocesan Historical Commission archives, which he received from Lieutenant General Birdwood the previous December. (pictured right)

On 13 April 1917 Fr Goidanich was repatriated to Australia as a result of the effect of his wounds. He was 'Chaplain on board' the *HMAT ULYSSES* for the journey home and then discharged on 26 April.

Back in Australia Fr Goidanich travelled by horse and cart throughout north-west Victoria to give comfort to parents and families who had relatives who died in the war. He was able to tell them that, 'I was able to hear your son's confession' or 'I spoke to him before he went over the top.'

Fr Goidanich took a portable altar (pictured) to the battlefields. When opened it would fold out for positioning of candleholders and copies of prayers before Mass. The compartment under the lid provided protection for the crucifix, vestments, hymnals, sacred vessels and detachable candle holders.

At Patchewollock in 2015 in the Ouyen Parish of the Ballarat Diocese at the Church of Mary Help of Christians, a parishioner was mystified by an altar box with shrapnel and burn marks, which was thought to have been used by Fr Goidanich or another chaplain during the war. As a result, there was renewed interest in the origin of the altar and it was recognised as a valuable item for inclusion in The Ballarat Diocesan Historical Commission archive collection.



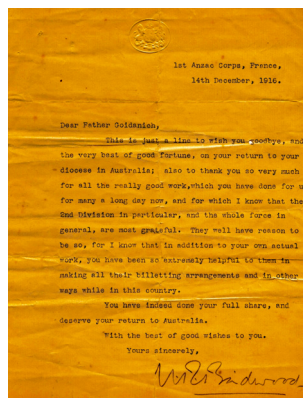
Dr Samantha Fabry, the Archivist for the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, is currently applying for a grant through the Department of Veterans Affairs – 'Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program' – to employ conservators from the Grimwade Conservation Services at the University of Melbourne to undertake the restoration of the altar.

Fr Goidanich endeared himself to his parishioners before and after he became a chaplain. For example, after less than two years in the parish of Charlton, north-west of Bendigo, he was transferred to Horsham. *The Horsham Times* of 12 May 1893 reported that, '... he has endeared himself to all sections of the community, but especially has he gained the high esteem of his own church, in whose spiritual and material concerns he has always taken the deepest interest ... In the course of a couple of days a sufficient sum was obtained to purchase a pair of horses and to allow of the presentation at the same time of a well filled purse of sovereigns.'

On 18 August 1948 in Ararat, Victoria the much-loved Monsignor Goidanich died at the age of 81. The *Melbourne Advocate* of 2 September 1948 reported that the President of the Ararat Shire Council said, 'The late Dean ... was one of the most broadminded men one could wish to meet. Although he was Dean of the Catholic Church, he did a great deal for people of other religions.'

The Fr Goidanich story is also told on the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance website. This link includes a photo of the laying of a poppy on the altar by Fr Mercovitch at Patchewollock in the Diocese of Bendigo in 2015:

<http://bitl.ly/portable-altar>



Gallipoli – Through the Eyes of a Soldier



Private Murray Aitken
AWM H06045

In previous issues we have remembered Anzac Day with this first issue of the year of these newsletters timed for distribution by Anzac Day. Alan Thompson wrote recently to the editor: 'My great Aunt Bessie had two sons, both of whom were killed in the First World War. Frank joined the British Army and was killed on the Western Front. James Murray Aitken grew up on the West Australian goldfields and joined up in 1914. He fought in the same regiment from 1914 to 1918. He was in the first landing at Gallipoli and was there until the withdrawal, and

then he fought in the trenches on the western front. He was promoted to an officer from the ranks and was awarded the Military Cross.

'Murray, as he was known in the family, was a very dutiful son and wrote to his mother regularly. His letters are held by the Australian War Memorial as one of the few surviving records of almost the entire war through the eyes of a soldier.

'Poor Aunt Bessie lost a husband to typhoid, her first baby to some other disease and both her sons Frank and Murray during the First World War.

'She lived through the Second World War, in which following the fall of Singapore she also lost a niece, Bessie Wilmot, who had lived with her aunt after being orphaned, and was killed in the Banka Island massacre; and her nephew – my father.'

Private Murray Aitken's first letter to his mother from Gallipoli— Thursday 29 April 1915

Well, Mother dear, at last I've got war to write of to you; we're in the thick of it, and have been since early Sunday morning. I'm writing under shrapnel fire (a thing I'm now injured to) the most deadly and awful fire of all; a single well placed shot will wipe out dozens and it inflicts gaping, terrifying wounds.

The "London" and five other battleships steamed with all lights out up the Gulf of Saros until 1 o'clock Sunday morning, when we got into the small boats which cautiously towed us inshore, the big, black hulls shepherding us as far as they dared; everything went smoothly until the fleets were just grating on the beach when --- bang! went the enemy's signal, followed closely by two more shots, then a whole fusillade; and so we landed under fire. I quite forgot to be frightened – then; for some reason, I got quite annoyed and reckoned to have my money's worth if I were to be shot so rushed ahead and did my bit with the rest. It was a matter of getting out and rushing the Turks with our bayonets, and we did; the boys behaved steadier than many veterans would have, under the circumstances, and drove the Turks from seemingly impregnable positions. And here I want to say emphatically that, with the exception of a few isolated examples, we were not led by our officers; the men acted on their own initiative, and by taking the whole affair into their own hands, so saved a very critical situation.

The country is very hilly, a succession of busy ridges running right to the water's edge; it's very clayey, in fact, would make a fortune for Jack, if he could have some of it there.

The Turks were entrenched on three of these ridges and we

drove them from each in succession; Mother, they won't face the bayonet and it's grand to see them running. I forgot to say that I landed in water up to my armpits and was wading out waist-deep when fixing my bayonet, so you see, there was no time to be lost; it spurned me on when I heard the pitiful cries of those who'd been hit in the water.

The sailors on the "London" say the 11th are marvels, and certainly, the heads have praised us. I should say that the three other landing parties from the Brigade had a harder time than we, for they appear to have come directly under shrapnel and machine-gun fire, this being particularly effective; in one spot there were about thirty bodies lying on the beach. After dinner we had to take up an entrenched position, for we knew they'd come back with reinforcements; and when they got their batteries properly going the carnage was simply awful and I saw sights that sickened me, Mother; that day we badly wanted our artillery, but still the naval guns did a lot of damage; it heartened us a lot, believe me, when we saw men, trees, rocks, portions of guns, etc all mixed and flying in the air, and it's a sober fact that we did see it as I describe it.

Upon looking at the bay in the afternoon I saw numbers of warships and transports with the much needed assistance for us; since then troops have been landed in abundance and we will win alright, altho' the battle is still raging. The enemy fires at all these ships, but is quite ignored and their shooting is very poor. One of their shells did actually sink as small trawler; this will surely figure in Turkish and German reports as a battleship, "Queen Elizabeth", maybe.

In the first rush I lost Mac, in fact, the whole battalion, and was with strangers until Tuesday afternoon, when the 3rd Brigade was called in for reorganization and the ascertaining of casualties. It's no good saying I wasn't afraid after the first intoxication had died down, for I was; at first the shrapnel had me shivering and the hail of bullets made me duck, but I'm over all that now; I think I hugged the earth closer than ever I hugged a girl, Mother.

Now it gives me a sort of blood-curdling satisfaction to shoot at men as fast as ever I can; and a bayonet charge is the acme of devilish excitement. Each night we have had to repel attacks, and the sight of the bayonet is quite sufficient for our friend the enemy.

We have to contend with snipers planted in all kinds of cleverly concealed places; spies and Germans in our uniforms who give orders such as these: "Cease fire, the Ghurkhas are in front of you", "The British and French are in the Turkish trenches two miles in front, be careful how you fire", "You are firing on your own men" and many similar messages which tended to confuse us, but they were usually found out and received but scanty shrift.

On Sunday night we were busy improving our trenches, harassed by the fire of the snipers and machine guns, and Monday morning saw wonders performed, for we had all sorts of shell-proof, traverse, and connecting trenches running right back to the beach. Our big guns were coming up also and from Monday on we've given a lot more than we got. Indian mountain guns are also operating. A novel feature is the great assistance given the artillery by the observations of a captive balloon and an aeroplane, the former rising from a steamer.

Until this evening, we've acted as reserves as New Zealanders, Marines, and others have been doing very well, but we are to go into the firing line again tomorrow evening. I forgot to say, previously that on the left wing it is estimated that 400 of our men held no less than 6000 Turks; the figures seem exaggerated, but are certainly no credit to the fighting qualities of the Turk, are they?

Continued p 5

LATE LIEUT. J. MURRAY AITKEN M.C.

In a letter congratulating the late Lieut. J. Murray Aitken on the occasion of the award to him of the Military Cross, General Birdwood says:—"This is a line to congratulate you very heartily on the award of the Military Cross, in recognition of your marked gallantry and devotion to duty in the operations near Strazeele, on the night of June 2. You not only handled your platoon with great skill and determination in our attack, but displayed commendable dash and initiative in controlling platoons on your flank, when these had become disorganised. You very gallantly, single-handed, attacked a machine-gun post, which was bringing enfilade fire to bear on your company, and captured the gun and 12 Germans. The result of your action was most valuable, as it saved many casualties, and cleared the right flank of the attack. Thank you very much for your excellent work, and with good wishes, yours sincerely (Signed) W. N. Birdwood."

The deceased officer enlisted on August 10, 1914, and proceeded to Blackboy six days later. He had risen from the ranks, and had been previously congratulated by General Birdwood on his promotion. He served for four years with the 11th Battalion, his death occurring in action this year. His brother, Lieut. Frank Aitken, was killed during the Cambrai operations of November, 1917, after three years' service. Both boys, who were the only sons of Mrs. B. Aitken, Keenan-street, Kalgoorlie, were educated at the Kalgoorlie Central School. They arrived on the goldfields with their mother, in 1897.

Kalgoorlie Miner, 16 December 1918, p3

From p4

Upon returning to the beach on Tuesday I was amazed at the spectacle which confronted me, in place of the bare beach we had landed on; men, like ants, were busy in every direction with stacks of stores and ammunition; guns were being rapidly prepared for action; mules and donkeys were being hurried to the front with water and supplies; a wireless station was in full working order; a telephone station, with wires stretching to every part of the firing line; in fact, the metamorphosis almost took my breath and one could not imagine a more thrilling sight than this to realize the power of England's military authorities. We found a fair amount of soak water, but tins of it were also being landed. Well, Mother, war is hell indeed - bloody hell; having to go through it, I think a man expiates all his sins; when one has to crouch in a shallow trench and listen to the bullets and shells whining and wailing overhead as if they were bemoaning the fact that their intended destination had not been reached, one realises that one is a sinner. But, ah! when the shells from our artillery and battleships roar and reverberate thro' the hills, and when our rifles crack and they whistle happily off on their journey, they are singing sweet music to us.

A thing I noticed is that at times I could see the flash and hear a shell whistle overhead from a battleship long before I heard the actual report; a peculiar effect. The Turks have been trying to place batteries on either flank and so enfilade our trenches; a few shots from the ships soon stop them though. All through the nights the ships play searchlights, like great unwinking eyes, on the danger spots and, when funny business is being tried, send in a few shots, thereby settling all argument; these searchlights remind me of nothing so much as long, uncanny, ghost fingers, fine tooth combing the country for danger.

Have just had a swim, my first wash since Saturday; there's just the element of danger in it as shrapnel comes over occasionally, and stray bullets are continually splashing in the water; whiskers half an inch long, altogether a pretty picture. Mother, I could tell you lots more but haven't the time, it will keep. After five days of continuous fighting I'm safe, so that's not so bad, Mother dear, considering the narrow escapes I've had; when helping wounded men and carrying ammunition (a voluntary job), shrapnel has been cutting the twigs from the bushes all round me and all I suffered was a bruised leg from a spent fragment, so, you see, I'm lucky so far. _____

Alan Thompson graduated from RMC Duntroon in 1960. He served in Vietnam in the Army Training Team and 1RAR (for which he received the US Bronze Star Medal), and subsequently in the Senior Executive Service in the Department of Defence.

His father, Captain Jack Thompson, 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion, was killed in the Fall of Singapore in February 1942. It is believed that he and a fellow officer managed to escape from a Japanese execution squad, but were pursued and killed.

Awarded the Military Cross. For conspicuous gallantry & devotion to duty in handling his own platoon with great skill and determination, and by his dash & initiative controlling platoons on his flank. Single handed he attacked an enemy machine-gun post, which was enfilading the company & captured the gun & twelve prisoners. This saved many casualties & cleared the right flank of the attack. He did splendid service.

*Military Cross citation 625 Lieutenant James Murray Aitken
National Archives Australia digital file B2455*

Fr Kene Onwukwe - Outstanding Award

A Catholic priest in Sydney's southwest has earned a prized military award for extraordinary service during last year's bushfire and pandemic crises.

Father Kene Onwukwe, administrator of St Anthony's Catholic Parish in Austral and a part-time military chaplain, received the 414 Award for military service this month. The annual award was established in honour of the service and sacrifice of the 414 military chaplains who served the nation's imperial forces during World War I, and is given to one chaplain each year.

Fr Kene said he was 'very happy' to receive his award at a ceremony at the Holsworthy Barracks and honoured to be recognised in connection to the efforts of those wartime chaplains.

He still swaps his clericals for camouflage to provide support to Australian Defence Force personnel deployed to Operation COVID-19 Assist who have been helping to manage the safe reception and any necessary quarantining of people travelling or returning to Australia from overseas.

It involves many phone calls, live streaming religious services, and donning full PPE to visit soldiers working at Sydney airport and quarantine hotels. And while he is a Catholic chaplain, he is available to anyone in need of support, regardless of their religious affiliation or denomination.

'People know that I'm a Catholic priest but I am a chaplain for everyone,' he said. 'Like St Paul wrote, "I am all things to all people", so there is always something I can offer to support them in their



Director General Army Chaplains Darren Jaensch presents Fr Kene with the 414 military award.

wellbeing, whether it be religious, pastoral, or psychological', Fr Kene said.

'I can help them find further support, be an advocate for them, or try to help with anything that is bothering them or limiting their performance of their duties. On the other hand, when something good happens, I can rejoice with them.'

The Nigerian-born priest joined the army reserve as a chaplain in 2018, and volunteered for deployment for several months full time with army units on the NSW south coast and Tasmania as part of Bushfire Assist last year.

In that role he not only provided pastoral and religious support to soldiers but rolled up his sleeves to do everything from clearing roads to repairing damage to property. Vicar general of the Catholic Military Ordinariate Monsignor Peter O'Keefe said that Fr Kene's award was well deserved as he 'clearly shows exemplary service and commitment to our soldiers and their families.'

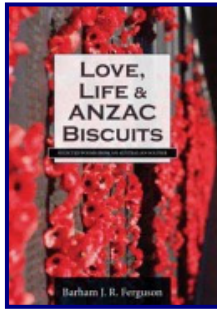
'He has a lovely personality and all the feedback I get from the various commanders he has worked with shows that he is deeply valued,' he said. '[The ADF] love him because of his ability to relate, care for and love soldiers and also because being

overseas-born he is well-placed to serve its increasingly cultural and ethnic diversity.'

Fr Kene said the job enriches him as well. 'The training I receive really helps me not only as a military chaplain but also in my parish life, it is helping to form me in ways that I can apply to my ministry here at St Anthony's', he said.

*Originally published by The Catholic Weekly, 24 March 2021.
Author Marilyn Rodrigues.*

Poems from the Heart



Love, Life & Anzac Biscuits is a book of moving poems written by Lieutenant Colonel Barham Ferguson (pictured) during full-time service in 2012. Before entering the Royal Military College, Duntroon, he attended St Patrick's College, Ballarat.

He saw operational service in Bougainville, Southern Thailand, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Israel and Jordan. Following retirement from the Army in 2018, he continues to serve in the Army Reserve.



ANZAC Day

A candle burns amongst its like
For another soldier dead.
The chapel glows at first with pride,
And prayers are sung not said.

Time again a flame is lit
Still another record erased.
And still there's more white candles lit,
For souls they have replaced.

The chapel walls reverberate
With distant falling shells.
As if they warn of unlit candles,
But it's only time that tells.

Closer by, the tap and knock
Of caskets newly made.
The fresh pine scent of clean new wood,
Will be buried before it fades.

And with them go the hearts and minds
Of family and of friends.
Who'll never know the pain they felt,
And why it never ends.

But here today, on ANZAC day
As memories are revived,
We cannot forget all those who fell,
Nor the handful who survived.

The march continues year on year
To warn of times ahead.
When a candle burns amongst its like,
For another soldier dead.

Darkened Breath

(Dawn Service at Canberra)

Amongst the silent crowd I
Hear only the slow and darkened
Breath of a man deep in thought.
Candles try in vain to light
The corners of his eyes
Where tears once formed and rolled.
Plumes of mist from mouths
Once kissed, fade quickly like
The words that follow them.
Ears under frost wince at
The onslaught of morning brass
And signal the arrival of
Sinking hearts and brand new tears.
Both silence and dawn are
Subtly broken as gunfire warms
The hearts of those who remember
Why rum was once a ration,
For amongst the silent crowd
I hear the slow and darkened breath,
Of those who breathe no more.

Leader's Prayer

My Lord
Thank you for today
That I have seen the
End of it pass quietly.
Help me face tomorrow
With pride and purpose.
Watch over my soldiers
When I cannot,
And help me lead them
When they need it most.
Help me to be sure
Of shot, and decisive on time.
Let me not be blinded
By the severity of my
Daily actions, and may
I never forget the value of life.
Watch over my family
And help me never to
Take their love for granted.
May I be cognisant and
Understanding of the
Needs of others, and
Appreciative when this
Is reciprocated.
Keep me safe in sleep
Than I may serve my
Country well,
At the rising of the sun.
Amen

The Padre

To bear a cross of any kind
Is to stand where others fall.
Robes of shepherds often find
A courage beneath it all.
For the flock of man can lose its way
In such a varied and pungent manner.
It takes a certain father figure,
Perhaps, a delicate hammer.
But braver still is the padre's lot
To guide and somehow aid,
The flock of seagulls bent on war,
And neither can be afraid.
A firmer hand to wield the staff
And an ear not bent by curse.
The chaplain's remit's camouflaged,
But without it, it would be worse.
Not every padre's a 'fighting Mac'
And not every soldier bleeds,
But the hand of God can steady them
In a crucial time of need.
As neutral as the padres are
They'll be tested and then tried.
But every soldier in the fight
Will want God on his side.

It Is I, My Lord

It is I, My Lord
It is I who would lead these men to war, so
they may find more opportune times to
Test their steely eyes.
It is I, My Lord,
Who would gamble quietly with the men
As they, with confidence bet heavily on
Themselves, to see this day through.
It is I, My Lord.
Who would march to their front
So that I may be the first to drown
In the dust of an oncoming unit.
It is I, My Lord,
Who would give the word that would
Unite these men in combat, that
They would become the very fists I fight with.
It is I, My Lord
Who would throw my scabbard to the
ground
And spring forth knowing my sword would
know
no rest, until saving the last, it would break.
It is I, My Lord
Who would stagger in blind fury through
Broken bayonet and dented helmet,
To find my loyal wounded soldiers.
It is I, My Lord,
Who would stand in waters way to
Witness the silent folding of a flag
And turning of ashes to dust.
It is I, My Lord
Who would do this all again
To save just one more life.
One more chance, at love.

Love, Life and ANZAC Biscuits is published by Vivid Publishing, Fremantle, WA, 2012.

Permission given by author to reproduce the poems.

The Padre was, at our request, written by the author for this issue of *Serving Faithfully*.

What is happening with the Plenary Council?

The last twelve months have been a much disrupted period for most people. The conduct of the Fifth Plenary Council for the Catholic Church in Australia has been similarly affected. Early last year Archbishop of Perth Timothy Costello, the Council's President, announced a twelve-month delay to the commencement of proceedings. In December it was also announced that the first assembly, now scheduled for 2-10 October 2021, will be conducted as a multi-modal gathering with a combination of online and face-to-face participation as uncertainty remains over restrictions on travel and gatherings. In June and July the delegates will complete a series of online preparatory sessions. Currently, the second assembly is planned to be conducted in Sydney in July 2022.

As a reminder, the National Themes for Discernment are based on discerning how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is:

- ◆ Missionary and evangelising
- ◆ Inclusive, participatory and synodal
- ◆ Prayerful and Eucharistic
- ◆ Humble, healing and merciful
- ◆ A joyful, hope-filled and servant community
- ◆ Open to conversion, renewal and reform

The Catholic Military Ordinariate's delegates are: Bishop Max, Monsignor Peter O'Keefe, Monsignor Glynn Murphy, Monsignor Stuart Hall and Major Gavin Keating. An excellent way to remain engaged with preparations for the Council is through its website: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au>. You can also subscribe to regular email updates of the 'Plenary Post' at this website.



In conversation with Lieutenant Owen Geddes

Lieutenant Owen Geddes is currently undertaking the second year of a three-year Bachelor of Theology degree at the Australian Catholic University, Canberra with a view to becoming an Army chaplain. This is his story.

Owen was born in June 1971 in Wagga Wagga, NSW and grew up half an hour away in a Catholic family on a mixed farming property close to the township of Yerong Creek. After education at Billabong Central High School, Culcairn, half an hour south on the Olympic Highway, he took on a Fitting and Machining Apprenticeship in Albury.

In his early 30s he enlisted into the RAAF as a Ground Mechanical Engineer Fitter. He recalled, 'I enlisted in order to broaden my world view and essentially to escape a small country town. I had a giggling feeling that I could be doing more with my life.'

On completion of recruit training school, he was posted to the 381 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron, RAAF Base Williamtown, NSW. From there he joined Australia's Federation Guard and then became an RAAF Military Skills Instructor at the Australian Defence Force Academy from 2009 to 2012. Further postings included 26 Squadron RAAF Base Williamtown and second stints at Australia's Federation Guard and the Australian Defence Force Academy.

While serving at the Defence Academy, at his own initiative, he undertook part-time study for the first year of a Theology Degree at the Australian Catholic University. After 17 years in the RAAF he successfully gained transfer to the Army in the middle of last year. He was commissioned and also sponsored for full-time study for the remaining two years of the Theology degree.

Owen said, 'It's been a long journey to get to this point that really started with my first exposure to a Chaplain at the RAAF 1 Recruit Training Unit, Wagga Wagga in 2003. This was reignited during my time at the Defence Academy. I realised that I could be doing more to help others and I found that my life to that point was very centred on my immediate family. The work environment gave me the opportunity to make a real difference in helping people to achieve positive outcomes. I felt I was giving back into the world through helping cadets deal with real welfare issues. This was very fulfilling and I felt a calling.'

Notwithstanding the satisfaction he had from his service, he reflected on his future. He said, 'I believe most members who get to about the 15-year mark usually reassess their goals and career options. I was searching for a job role that was away from engineering and more people focussed. I now believe that I have found what I have been searching for and the path that God has set for me.'

When asked about his broader interests, he said, 'My passions include a 1967 VW kombi panel van that has consumed a large amount of money and time. I was told years ago that when your vehicle breaks down it is just a bonding experience with the car. I have bonded a lot with my kombi. Above that, by a long way though, is being married to Sharon and having four wonderful children: Angus 19, Ben 18, Flynn 16 and Asha 7— all of whom have been extremely supportive throughout the whole process.'

When Owen was asked to explain the fundamental reason why he wants to become a chaplain, he said, 'My motivation to become a Chaplain in the ADF is to make a positive difference in developing strong future leaders with compassion and empathy.'

Lieutenant Owen Geddes
with Sharon and Asha
at the Canberra Balloon
Spectacular



Donations

The sources of income for the Military Diocese are very limited, and have reduced significantly during the past year:

- ◆ All dioceses and parishes have been affected by the closure of churches as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, some generous donations previously received from other dioceses have not been possible.
- ◆ The Knights of the Southern Cross undertake annual fundraising to support the education and continuing development of Chaplains and Deacons at their annual conference, but that was cancelled last year.
- ◆ Our chaplains continue to donate selflessly a proportion of their salary.
- ◆ We have received continuing donations from supporters, but these are about half of normal expectations.

If you would like to support the Military Diocese with tax-deductable donations you can make a direct bank transfer to the Armed Services Catholic Diocese BSB: 062 786 ACCOUNT No: 18662.

Would you please contact the Chancery on 02 6248 0511 or email sec@cmoa.org.au so that a receipt can be provided.

Anzac: The Relationship between Culture and Religion

Major Gavin Keating DSC, CSC



MAJ Gavin Keating

*Rightly or wrongly, desirably or not, we have invented Anzac in our own image and continue to define our nation by its projections. (Graham Seal, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology*)*

The Australian historian Ken Inglis's pioneering work on the 'Anzac phenomenon' was driven by his belief that 'the ceremonies of life and death performed on Anzac Day should tell much about our

society; and a national history, which does not explore the meaning of these ceremonies, is too thin.'

Interpreting Anzac

The cultural power of Anzac has made the interpretation of its meaning subject to many competing forces. From its very beginning there was a dynamic tension between its use to commemorate and mourn Australia's war dead and its use to celebrate their contribution to building national consciousness and identity. Many organisations and individuals have attempted to be the authoritative interpreters of Anzac's significance. Over time their relative influences have varied, as have their approaches to the issue of 'commemoration or celebration' and the degree to which they have cooperated or competed. Church involvement has primarily been concerned with the commemorative aspect of Anzac. Given the ancient role of religion in mediating the meaning of death, and the massive loss of life Australia experienced during the First World War, this is not remarkable. That the form of this mediation was unmistakably Christian in orientation should also not be considered extraordinary, given at the time of the conflict 96 percent of Australians identified themselves as Christians.

The general form of the theological response was well summarised in a sermon given by Canon David John Garland, a Great War military chaplain, on Anzac Day 1924: 'Thus in the house of God, pleading before the altar of God, we find the most comfort, not in the sorrow of those without hope for them that sleep in Him, nor by swamping our grief in noisy demonstrations; but by emphasising in mind and thought the reality of that life beyond the veil where they live for evermore and where some day, we, too, shall meet them.'

John Moses, one of Inglis's sharpest critics, has written extensively about the general role played by Australia's churches in addressing the nation's losses. He has particularly noted Garland's specific role, over an extended period of time, in institutionalising the liturgy of Anzac Day services in a manner that was sufficiently ecumenical to avoid denominational frictions yet sufficiently spiritual to meet the need for 'massive grief management'.

Interpretative Struggles

Anzac's religious custodians have often found themselves in conflict with other interpretative guardians. This can partly be seen in the arguments that continued for decades after the First World War about whether Anzac Day should be 'holy day' or a 'holiday.' There were a number of instances between the 1930s to the mid-1960s when the Returned Servicemen's League attempted to diminish clerical influence over, and participation in, its Anzac services. More recent religious contributions to Anzac ceremonies have been tempered by what Michael Galdwin has noted as 'mounting pressures on chaplains to fashion an inclusive and less distinctly Christian liturgy.' However, there is a strong case for suggesting that there has been a stronger and more persistent Christian influence over national Anzac Day commemorations than some commentators have allowed. For example, military chaplains have played an important role in the dawn service at the Australian War Memorial in recent times and continue to provide religious input into the planning of national commemorative services.

Persistence of Religious Influence

If it is accepted that religion continues to play a part in the Anzac phenomenon, albeit in the background, what accounts for this

persistence? Although Inglis may have underplayed Christianity's role in Anzac commemorations, it could not be said that he ignored that there was a spiritual element to them. This is clear in his book *Sacred Places* where he wrote that the 'Australian War Memorial and other repositories of the Anzac tradition do enjoin not just respect but an awareness of the holy.' The term 'sacred' was applied to the Anzac phenomenon early in its cultural life. While its application does not necessarily imply a connection to the transcendent, it does suggest a reverence which is distinguished from the everyday. Graham Seal has concluded that Anzac ceremonies have acted to 'sacralise the secular in minimalist terms of Christian belief and observance.' This suggests that in the provision of meaning to Anzac's commemorative function there has been an enduring requirement for a transcendent referent, regardless of how well this has been disguised or downplayed.

Religion is a powerful interpretative lens for understanding Anzac. Equally, Anzac's relationship with religion is valuable for examining the place of religion in Australian society more broadly. Australian religious observance has been described as typically shy, non-demonstrative, reluctant to observe formality, marked by a preference for quiet reverence and focused on a mateship grounded in adversity. These characteristics correlate well with observations that the religious contribution to Anzac has been downplayed. Much of the ambivalence surrounding the place of religion in the Anzac phenomenon can be explained if it is concluded that this simply reflects how religion interacts with national life in a more general sense. One noted Catholic historian explained this deficiency as deriving from the fact that religion's role in Australian life has been 'private, subterranean, elusive, complex, ambiguous [and] mysterious.' This is also a fitting description for the role of religion in Anzac.

The Future

One thing that can be said with certainty is that Anzac has proven to be a remarkably resilient cultural phenomenon. What the future holds for Anzac's religious dimensions is difficult to forecast. One issue is what will happen as Australians become increasingly disassociated from the Christian traditions which form the



unobtrusive foundations for Anzac's commemorative functions. The meaning associated with mourning the nation's war dead is already changing as increasingly fewer people have familial relationships with the deceased. Remembrance may become focussed solely on the collective sense of what the sacrifices represented by the fallen mean to the nation and its future. However, while the Anzac phenomenon still requires meaning to be attributed to death, it would seem religion will necessarily continue to play a mediating role between the secular and the sacred. Perhaps Australia has more need of religion than its

outward persona as a rational and highly secularised society would suggest.

The anthropologist Ruth Benedict believed that 'no part of a cultural complex is to be understood or evaluated without reference to the whole.' The relationship between the Anzac phenomenon and religion confirms the validity of this thesis. The role of the Christian churches in mediating the grief resulting from the horrendous casualties of the Great War reflected the historical place of Christianity in Australian society and assisted in enshrining Christian liturgical practices into developing commemorative services. The continuance of a religious component to these services points to the importance of Anzac's sacredness remaining connected to a sense of the transcendent. That this has been minimised reflects the general preference in Australian society for religion to exist largely in the background of national life. The role that religion will continue to play in Anzac is not certain, but while the commemoration of the nation's war dead forms the central component of this phenomenon it would seem that it will always have a place. If Anzac mirrors Australian society then its religious component offers a window through which this society can be better understood.

This is an edited version of a paper that was first published in the Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal, 2019 Edition, which contains the full academic citations. Major Keating recently completed a Bachelor of Theology at the Australian Catholic University as part of his formation for the permanent diaconate and military chaplaincy. He is currently undertaking a pastoral placement in Canberra at Corpus Christi Parish.