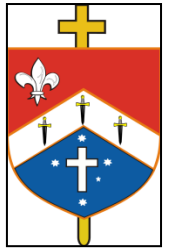


Serving Faithfully

Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Military Services
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Issue #42



UKRAINE

Pope Francis has taken a significant step in his condemnation of war in Ukraine and promotion of peace. On Friday 25 March he consecrated Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The day was also the Feast of the Annunciation, celebrating Mary's acceptance of the invitation to become the mother of Jesus. The gesture echoes the Pope's prayer on Ash Wednesday: 'May the Queen of Peace preserve the world from the madness of war.'

The pope pronounced the Act of Consecration after leading a Lenten penance service in St Peter's Basilica. He prayed, 'Mother of God and our mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine.'

Praying before a statue of Mary (pictured) that was lent by the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima at San Vittoriano on the outskirts of Rome, the pope pleaded with Mary to 'accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love. Grant that war may end, and peace spread throughout the world.'

In front of the statue, which was placed before the steps of the main altar on a red platform and adorned with white roses, the pope proclaimed the act of consecration. During the prayer, the pope paused at several moments to gaze at the statue of Mary before continuing to recite the prayer, 'To you we consecrate the future of the whole human family, the needs and expectations of every people, the anxieties and hopes of the world.'

After the consecration, the pope, accompanied by a young boy and girl, placed a bouquet of white roses at the feet of the statue. He then remained for a few moments, with eyes closed and head bowed in silent prayer, before stepping away.

In his prayer, Pope Francis specifically asked Mary to be with those suffering directly because of the war. 'May your maternal touch soothe those who suffer and flee from the rain of bombs. May your motherly embrace comfort those forced to leave their homes and their native land. May your sorrowful heart move us to compassion and inspire us to open our doors and to care for our brothers and sisters who are injured and cast aside.'

He invited all the Catholic Bishops of the world to join him in making the consecration.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge said, 'The bishops of Australia are united with the Holy Father as he leads the faithful around the world in this act of consecration and we invite all people to join us in praying for peace in Ukraine.'

'Thousands have died, millions have fled and millions more are living in fear. We raise our hearts, our minds and our voices to God for an end to this horrific violence and destruction.'

'We express our deep compassion for the people of Ukraine and our solidarity with all people of Ukrainian heritage here in Australia.'

'It's not enough to condemn the bloodshed, breathe threats and take half-measures. The entire international community – including Australia – needs to do all in its power to stop the violence.'

'This isn't some geopolitical game. Lives are at stake. The lies have to stop. Truth and justice have to prevail if there is to be a future for all of us.'

'Ukraine may seem a long way from Australia, but what's happening there is not. Ukraine has become the world which will never be the same because of this militarised barbarism.'

'Prayer is more powerful than bombs. So we'll be praying for an immediate ceasefire and a return to reason and negotiation. We're also praying for those who have been killed, wounded or forced to flee.'



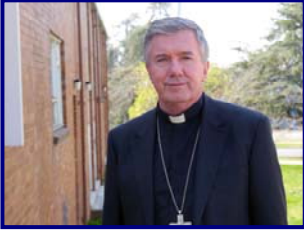
The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference recently issued a prayer for peace in Ukraine.



God of peace and justice,
who change the hardened heart and break
the power of violence,
we entrust the people of Ukraine to you.
Protect them in this time of peril;
let them know not death but life,
not slavery but freedom.
You are Father of all;
we are brothers and sisters.
Give us the strength to live that truth in love,
choosing peace not war.
Through Christ our Lord.

Acknowledgement: Catholic News Service 25 March 2022. Photo Paul Haring. Text based on report by Junno Arocho Esteves and Australian Catholic Bishops Conference media release 26 February 2022.

Easter Humanity



Most Rev Christopher C Prowse
DD STD

In recent years it seems that our annual celebration of Easter accompanies some societal calamity.

There has been bushfires, then the covid pandemic, and now the Russian-Ukraine conflict.

This current war is particularly disturbing because it arises not from nature or health issues but from a violence within the heart of our shared humanity.

War is the very opposite to the peace and joy of Easter. It is a defeat for humanity. It seems that the new humanity made present in the Easter Jesus has been cast aside. Offered light eternal, war opts for living in darkness.

In our Easter Liturgy, a totally different humanity is announced.

The Easter Vigil (Exsultet) proclamation chants 'Christ your Son, who coming back from death's domain, has shed his peaceful light on humanity, and lives and reigns for ever and ever.'

Embracing Easter humanity in the Risen Jesus is clearly an unending task for every age, especially our present time.

Jesuit priest, Fr Andriy Zelinskyy, Ukrainian military chaplain, describes the present war as 'cruel, and is one of the most absurd, senseless wars in the history of Europe ... There is no reason for the violence'. He calls for prayer as the way of 'keeping hope alive that the war will come to an end and evil will never prevail.'

Praying for hope in war has a practical dimension. As an Archdiocese, we are becoming deeper friends with our local Catholic Ukrainian priest, Fr Wally Kalinecki, and Russian Orthodox priest, Fr Alexander Morozow. I have assured both communities of our prayers and support in these fragile times.

Ukrainian refugees are beginning to arrive in the Archdiocese. Many more will follow. I mentioned to Fr Kalinecki that our Archdiocese stands ready to provide whatever practical assistance deemed appropriate for these traumatised families.

Fr Zelinskyy challenges us by stating: 'Please wake up ... we are stronger together ... we find ourselves at a time when the greatest gift we have is in danger, that is, our humanity ... come back to the gift of our humanity because it is something we need to treasure.'

Easter humanity in Christ Crucified and Risen is not a sentimental religious pious thought. It is the very essence of our Christian humanity – mind, heart and deeds.

As St Paul declares, when Christ is 'your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.' (Col. 3/4)

May the Easter Jesus bless and protect you always! He is truly Risen! Alleluia!

Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn
Apostolic Administrator, Military Ordinariate of Australia

Easter 2022

*Yes, it is true.
The Lord has risen!*

...and they told their story of what had happened and how they had recognised him at the breaking of the bread.

@CATH FAMILY.org

Lk 24: 34-35

The Military Ordinariate Family wishes you and your family every happiness and blessing this Easter.

Prayer for the appointment of a new Bishop

O God, eternal Shepherd,
Who govern your flock with unfailing care,
grant in your boundless love
a Bishop for the Diocese of the
Australian Military Services
who will please You by his holiness
and to us show watchful care.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen
Mary, Help of Christians,
Pray for us.



Operation Flood Assist 2022 (OPFA22)

Bishop Gregory Homeming of the Lismore Diocese spoke from his heart about the floods affecting the community. His video was very moving. He clearly showed his deep concern and the feeling of helplessness that the floods have caused. His moving video is at: bit.ly/bishop-homeming-floods.



Most Reverend Gregory Homeming OCD DD, Bishop of Lismore

He said:

As you all know we here in Lismore and indeed in the Diocese of Lismore have had a very tragic few days. So much of the Diocese is flooded. You've probably seen on television how extensive the flooding of our city has been. Even I as the Bishop was evacuated by boat at the peak of the flooding. So much is underwater. So many houses have been destroyed. We've seen our people waiting on the roofs of houses for hours upon hours

waiting to be rescued. This has all happened at a time when we were hoping that 2022 would be a year of hope, a good year.

Our first flood in Lismore was in 2017 and I don't know that we've really as a community recovered from that flood. COVID hit. Fires hit and we've been in I suppose a state of hope looking to the future. Where's it going? And now we've been hit again at a time when our hearts were already heavy with the many things that have happened. I even as Bishop don't know what can we do. We all feel absolutely helpless. In many ways, I suppose, some of us feel that God hasn't been with us. We feel overwhelmed and that's coming from me.



St Carthage's Cathedral Lismore. The statue of the Holy Mother stands on six steps and a plinth.

Yesterday, I was at one of the evacuation centres and I saw the people there and these people have lost everything that they have; helpless, despairing. No doubt there will also be mental health issues coming up. This is where we are at the moment and the first thing that I

want to say is everybody in Lismore suffers with those who have lost everything – in fact everyone in the Diocese because I've received messages from everywhere, even around the world. They are with us; they wish they could help. So, in that sense, we are not alone. The only problem is we don't know where to go; how to get out of this.

As the church even, we've lost so much. So much of what we've got is underwater. That severely limits what we can do but we will begin raising what money we can and use what we've got to find ways to help those who've lost everything. It's not obvious yet what can be done but we will work with those that have expertise to see what we can do. The last flood, we simply gave mattresses in the Diocese; now there are too many mattresses for me to be able to replace and I don't know that that's the main need. Food, care of people, the reinstatement of hope, of trust. This is our task and we are in it together as the people of Lismore, the people of Lismore Diocese.

I can say that everyone is in this together, everyone is helpless but we will do our best to make sure we come out of this. Having been here for five years, I know that Lismore people are resilient and strong. That has supported me for five years and I'm quite sure that together we will come out of this horrible spot and perhaps one day, many years later look back on this time and talk about the goodness which this terrible flood has brought out of each of us.

I offer you my prayers, ongoing support and let's work together in the future.

Defence Support

Defence support to Queensland and NSW governments is being delivered under Operation Flood Assist 2022 and coordinated through Headquarters Joint Operations Command. Deployment of forces is in response to NSW Government and Queensland Government requirements coordinated and prioritised through State Emergency Operations Centres. A link to daily ADF updates from 25 February is available at: bit.ly/floodassist2022. Images taken by the ADF are available at: bit.ly/floodassist2022-photos.

Fr John Joel Vergara reports from Lismore:

I was called up to provide chaplaincy support to Operation Flood Assist 2022. I have spent just over a month in Lismore.

In the midst of widening trauma, loss and grief in Lismore, the presence of the ADF brought hope and relief in the communities. In many instances, while walking in public, people would come to us just to say 'thank you'. Locals expressed their gratitude, sometimes in tears. I had personally experienced this a number of times.

The ADF deployed several chaplains to support OPFA22. It was a big team effort to provide chaplaincy coverage for the soldiers, sailors and aviators who came from all over Australia and were sent out to various areas of operation (AO) in Northern NSW.

We visited the community evacuation and resilience centres, schools, church communities and liaised with civilian chaplains and volunteers in our own AO. We provided Sunday services to the members and also brought others to local churches to attend in worship.

I had not witnessed so much devastation and loss than in Lismore: it was like a war zone. It was heartbreaking to see how people's livelihood, sentimental items and everything they own were destroyed and dumped on the streets. The locals are exhausted, devastated and searching for answers.

I pray that the Lord will give the people of Lismore comfort, strength and certain hope through His Easter Resurrection.

You can read further about Fr Joel's reflection and challenges during OPFA22 on the Diocesan website at www.military.org.au.



Fr Joel (in purple vest) assisting with the cleanup.



Fr Joel (second from left rear row) with ADF and Fire and Rescue NSW personnel.

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

Anzac Reflection

Anzac Day is remembered in cities and towns across Australia as well by Australians in many other countries. In 1916 on the first anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli a service was held on the Western Front by an Australian battalion. Dawn services spontaneously occurred around the country in subsequent years.



The Morning Bulletin, Rockhampton, on 26 April 1916, (pictured) reported that over 600 people attended a 6.30am interdenominational service.

A ceremony in Albany Western Australia in 1923 (or later) is often referred to as the first dawn service. It was

initiated by Reverend Arthur White who had served as an army chaplain at Gallipoli. His congregation marched to a point overlooking King George Sound in Albany where the troops left for the Middle East in 1914. He said, 'Albany was the last sight of land these Anzac troops saw after leaving Australian shores and some of them never returned. We should hold a service (here) at the first light of dawn to commemorate them.' As the sun was rising a wreath was cast into King George Sound and Reverend White quietly recited, 'As the sun rises and goeth down, we will remember them.'

The dawn service in 1928 at the newly-built Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney is acknowledged as the commencement of the first continuous dawn service. By 1935 the participants had grown to 10,000.

My first memory of Anzac Day is at the imposing 30.5m (100ft) Albury and District War Memorial (pictured). In the early post-war years my father, who served in Tobruk, PNG and Borneo, took me to the Anzac Day ceremony. I recall that he was quite upset with the childhood antics of a friend and me during the service. But a decade later, as a 16-year-old, I proudly carried the Australian Flag in front of the 1st Mordialloc Sea Scouts as part of an Anzac Day march through the city centre of the Melbourne bay-side suburb of Mordialloc.



In subsequent years certain Anzac Days stand out. In 1966 my Engineer Troop, based in Malaysia, was deployed to Loeng Nok Tha in north-east Thailand as part of a Far East Land Forces initiative to construct an airfield as a strategic reserve for the Southeast Asia Treaty

Organization. An Australian chaplain with us led a moving dawn service, which was also attended by a number of British service members, including the squadron commander. This, of course, was followed by a Gunfire Breakfast and two-up. Then in 1999 our British squadron commander joined former troop members in Hobart for a reunion on Anzac Day and proudly joined us in the march through Macquarie Street to the Cenotaph in Queen's Domain.

In 1988 I was in a posting in Perth WA and attended the dawn service at the State War Memorial in King's Park. I found this unusual as it was a silent ceremony except for the recital of The Ode, playing of Last Post and Reveille and gunfire at the end of the ceremony. I was told that this was based on a similar original approach in Albany.

I was in London for Anzac Day 2014. I joined a parade with about 100 other veterans to march to the Cenotaph in Whitehall with the band of the Blues and Royals leading. At the end of the ceremony there was a rousing rendition of *Waltzing Matilda*. This was followed by a memorable service in Westminster Abbey where Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, represented the Queen.

For many years I have attended the annual Anzac Day Mass at St Christopher's in Canberra. A stirring feature has been the presence of an Ensign Party provided by the Australian Defence Force Academy.

In 2019 the Royal Australian Engineers celebrated its centenary. The Corps had the privilege of leading the annual mid-morning Anzac Day march on Anzac Parade towards the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. I could not help but feel a burst of pride when those waiting to join the march applauded us so enthusiastically.

Anzac Day is such a special day, especially for current and former service members and their families. I hope some of my memories might spur you to reflect on Anzac Day occasions that have special meaning to you also.

(Editor)



Vicar General Mgr O'Keefe receiving the Ensign Party at the annual Anzac Day Mass at St Christopher's Cathedral Canberra

Anzac Day this year is a time to meditate on war, to honour those who have been required to serve in it, to be compassionate to those who have lost lovers and children, and to feel with those who have lost their humanity through their experience of war.

May our commemoration of ANZAC this year also open our hearts to those affected by current conflicts, particularly those forced to flee their homes as refugees.

Acknowledgement: Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ, *Australian Catholics Magazine*, 30 Mar 22

The National Anzac Day Mass will be held at St Christopher's Cathedral Canberra at 8am on 25 March. For live streaming go to:
military.catholic.org/events/event-stream

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 Ordinariate of the Australian



Euthanasia

NSW Parliamentary Bill on Euthanasia

Australian State governments are constitutionally responsible for laws regarding euthanasia, whereas the federal government has this responsibility in the case of the territories. Of our six states, five have passed legislation, typically referred to as assisted suicide or voluntary assisted dying.

Since June 2019 an assisted suicide scheme has been in place in Victoria, while Western Australia introduced a similar scheme, which came into effect in July 2021. Tasmania passed voluntary assisted dying legislation in March 2021. This is expected to go into effect in October 2022; and South Australia passed similar legislation in June 2021. Queensland legislation of September 2021 goes into effect in January 2023. Under federal law voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide are illegal in all territories of Australia, and also in New South Wales under the Crimes Act 1900.

Euthanasia was legal for a period between 1996 and 1997 in the Northern Territory, until a federal law overturning the territory law (and removing the right of territories to legislate on euthanasia) was passed.

Throughout Australia a patient can elect not to receive any treatment for a terminal illness and can also elect to have their life support turned off.

In 1997 the Federal Parliament prevented the Northern Territory Parliament and Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly from legislating to allow euthanasia or assisted suicide by amending the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 and Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988.

In 2017 the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill debate was defeated in the NSW Upper House by one vote. Last November the NSW Parliament Legislative Assembly passed a Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill after four days of debate and more than 150 amendments. In favour were 52, a majority of 20. Both Premier Dominic Perrottet and Opposition Leader Chris Minns voted against the bill. It is now being considered in the Upper House in its second reading. If the bill passes the Upper House it will take another 18 months before people can access voluntary assisted dying medication.

Submission by Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP



Most Reverend Anthony Fisher
OP, Archbishop of Sydney

The bill was referred to an Upper House Standing Committee on Law and Justice. A total of 107 submissions were received (see: bit.ly/euthanasia inquiry). The submission by Archbishop Fisher of 22 November is at number 38 on the link. The Archbishop addressed the committee on 10 December. As reported in *The Catholic Weekly*, he stated in part:

'I appear on behalf of the Catholic Bishops of NSW and the Bishops of the Australasian-Middle East Christian Apostolic Churches. The faithful of our communities make up a quarter of the

population of this state.

'The Catholic Church in NSW operates 11 hospitals and 59 nursing and aged care facilities, each of which is directly affected by this bill. The Catholic faithful also provide a significant proportion of the state's healthcare workforce. Catholic health and aged care institutions are founded on the belief in the sanctity of human life and the inalienable dignity of the person.

'The proposition that human life is inviolable has been part of the common morality of the great civilisations, the best secular philosophies, the common law, international human rights documents, pre-Christian Hippocratic ethics, the codes of the World Medical Association and the Australian Medical Association, and the world's great religions. Unsurprisingly, we oppose any attempt to legalise euthanasia or assisted suicide in this state. Our opposition is based not only on beliefs, but also upon the desire to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

'Legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide will be a radical departure from one of the foundational principles of our society. It

confirms in law that some people are regarded as better off dead and that our legal system, health professionals and care institutions will help to make them dead. These laws separate us into two classes of people: those whose lives are considered sacred and whose deaths we invest heavily in preventing, and those who are considered dispensable and whose deaths we invest in assisting.

'As time goes on and assisted suicide is normalised, this latter class of people expands. In Canada, for example, euthanasia was legalised in 2016. Within 5 years, the class of those eligible expanded from the terminally ill to the chronically sick or disabled who are not dying, and the requirement of natural death being reasonably foreseeable was repealed. In less than 18 months from now, eligibility will also extend to those suffering mental illness alone. In due course we can expect provision for the unconscious and children ... religious believers cannot approach this issue from a sanitised distance, as care of the sick and dying is core to our mission. It is the reason why the

Catholic Church is the oldest and largest provider of healthcare, aged care and palliative care in the world. Those who seek to exclude religious voices from this discussion, or minimise the weight given them, are not only demonstrating anti-religious bias but also rejecting the views of one of the chief providers of end-of-life care.

'I appreciate that the terms of reference for this inquiry do not address the fundamental question of whether NSW should cross the precipice of allowing some of its citizens to be killed or assisted to kill themselves. Instead we are asked to focus on the provisions of the bill before us. These provisions are addressed in our submission in detail. However, it is worth noting that the bill lacks many of the safeguards in the bill presented to this Legislative Council just four years ago. It also represents a serious attack on the freedom of religious hospitals and aged care facilities to operate in accordance with their ethos which the previous bill did not. I ask this Committee to consider seriously the amendments we have proposed. (Note: The submission contained 54 recommendations grouped under relative headings of: Choice of language, Access to healthcare, Eligibility, Process, Conscience protections, Enforcement, Review, and Transparency and accountability.)

'Finally, it would be remiss of me not to record that this inquiry is the shortest in duration of any inquiry before this Committee—and perhaps any committee—in the history of the NSW Parliament. It is the shortest inquiry into euthanasia and assisted suicide held in any Australian jurisdiction. It has allowed fewer submissions than any other state inquiry. It is also being held at a time when our health professionals are fully occupied, even overstretched, by the COVID pandemic and so have been unable to contribute as they might to the inquiry and broader debate.

'Notwithstanding the incredibly short timeframe, I ask the Committee to consider carefully the many submissions before it and to ensure that the law does not put the already vulnerable even more at risk.'

NSW Legislative Assembly Second Reading Debate

On 23 February 2022, during the Second Reading Debate of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021, the Hon Lou Amato MLA quoted the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* in which Pope John Paul II said of euthanasia:

'Here we are faced with one of the more alarming symptoms of the culture of death, which is advancing above all in prosperous societies, marked by an attitude of excessive preoccupation with efficiency and which sees the growing number of elderly and disabled people as intolerable and too burdensome ... Even when not motivated by a selfish refusal to be burdened with the life of someone who is suffering, euthanasia must be called a false mercy, and indeed a disturbing 'perversion' of mercy. True 'compassion' leads to sharing another's pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear. Moreover, the act of euthanasia appears all the more perverse if it is carried out by those, like relatives, who are supposed to treat a family member with patience and love, or by those, such as doctors, who by virtue of their specific profession are supposed to care for the sick person even in the most painful terminal stages.'

Continued p6

From p5

In concluding his statement to the Legislative Assembly, the Hon Lou Amato stated:

‘Lest we think that because other States in Australia have legalised voluntary assisted dying, New South Wales should do so as well. We should be aware that only 10 of the 195 countries recognised by the United Nations have legalised voluntary assisted dying: Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, a few States in the US and all States in Australia except New South Wales. The immense majority of the countries of the world do not have voluntary assisted dying. If they do not need it then we do not. If this bill becomes law and the dangers that have been forewarned become *reality*—and, honourable members, they will become reality—who will say to themselves, *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa?*’

The bill was further debated on 30 March with 22 members indicating that they would support it. Additional members will have an opportunity to address the Upper House when private members’ business is considered in May.

United Kingdom Approach

A recent proposed amendment to the UK Health and Social Care Bill was aimed at forcing the British government to introduce assisted-suicide legislation. But members of the House of Lords rejected the amendment number 170 by 179 to 145 votes, following a 16 March debate. The defeat of the amendment represents the 12th time in 25 years that the British Parliament has dismissed an attempt to legalise assisted suicide, which is punishable under the Suicide Act 1961 by up to 14 years in jail.

The government opposed the legislation because it would set a precedent whereby politicians could dictate legislative programs ahead of terms of office.

Personal Experiences

Archbishop Fisher

During his appearance before the Legislative Assembly Committee on 10 December, Archbishop Fisher said:

‘Many of those who have made submissions to this Committee have spoken of their own personal experience. I would like to speak briefly of my own. In 2015, a sudden attack of Guillain-Barré Syndrome left me close to death, paralysed from the neck down, in extreme pain and reliant on others for every aspect of my existence for the next five months in hospital.

‘My recovery was a very slow and painful process. I was embedded amongst patients suffering from multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease and other degenerative and ultimately fatal illnesses. Although I recovered, I had an experience of the kind of suffering that makes some people want to end it all.

‘Both my parents are in nursing care and my mother is presently dying of bone marrow cancer. In addition to my own illness and that of people I love, I have more than thirty years’ experience as a pastor walking with the sick and their fatigued carers, sitting by the

dying and offering love and hope, prayer and sacrament, and commending the dead to God while comforting their grieving families.

‘As difficult as these times have been, I have also witnessed the reconciliation and peace that comes with letting these things work themselves through.’

Lord Shinkwin

In October 2015 Kevin Shinkwin, who was disabled, was created a Life Peer, taking the title Lord Shinkwin. Since becoming a Peer, he has focused on disability equality issues, combating anti-Semitism and the importance for UK democracy of respecting the people’s vote in the referendum of 2016.



Lord Shinkwin

Before entering the Lords, he worked for almost 20 years in the voluntary sector, serving in various public affairs roles, including at RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People), Macmillan, Cancer Research UK, and The Royal British Legion, where he led successful campaigns on the Armed Forces Covenant and securing reforms to the coroner’s service for bereaved Armed Forces families.

Hansard of 16 March for the House of Lords records that during the debate to introduce assisted-suicide legislation, Lord Shinkwin said:

‘Exactly seven weeks ago, not just to the day but to the exact hour, I started to feel very ill. I was barely 36 hours out of the operating theatre after surgery that had gone incredibly well and I knew something was seriously wrong. By midnight I was in agony, my bowels totally blocked by the combined effects of the anaesthesia and the pain relief. By the morning, I was passing blood and my haemoglobin levels had plummeted. That was just seven weeks ago. It was at that point that a decision was made to transfer me by ambulance to St Thomas’ A&E so that I could have an urgent blood transfusion. I lived to tell the tale, but tell it I would much rather not have done. I would much rather forget the whole episode—the unbelievable pain, the helplessness and the acute sense of vulnerability. My family do not know any of this; I have not told them. I am hoping they do not read Hansard.

‘I share it with your Lordships’ House because I believe that my recent experience is directly relevant to Amendment 170. We have been assured that this is not about the merits of assisted dying, but noble Lords should not underestimate the magnitude of what is at stake in this amendment. This is not the start of some cosy conversation about a harmless, anodyne measure. The end goal is assisted suicide and the means is a Bill proposed in this amendment. If this amendment were passed tonight, I firmly believe that in years to come, we would look back and say that today—16 March 2022—was a pivotal moment.’

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.

Battle of Noreuil

Recently the editor attended a delightful birthday party for a grandson in Albury at the River Deck Cafe on the banks of the Murray River. The origin of the park's name became apparent from a metal plaque (see photo) near the cafe commemorating the historic defence in April 1917 of the Albury Battery in what became known as the Battle of Noreuil.



BATTLE OF NOREUIL

In April 1917, the 'Albury Battery' (13th Battery - 5th Field Artillery Brigade) was positioned near the French village of Noreuil supporting the attack on Bullecourt.

In the early hours of April 15th the Germans launched a counter-attack. It broke through the Australian line and surrounded the Albury Battery. It seemed likely the Battery would be forced to abandon its guns and withdraw but instead decided to fight on.

The gunners pulled the guns out of the gun-pits into the open where they could fire to the flank and rear. From exposed positions, they kept up sustained fire at close range, held off the enemy until the Australian infantry arrived and then assisted in driving the Germans back, thus restoring the front line.

The Albury Battery went on to fight at Ypres, Amiens and Mont St Quentin, but after the war declared the stand at Noreuil to be its finest.

Albury & District Men of the 'Albury Battery' at the WWI Battle of Noreuil, France.

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Allen E E | McDonald R H |
| Arthur J | McMeekin J F |
| Bennett C | Miles S J |
| Bowler H P | Mongan F |
| Bradburne J T | Murphy R |
| Carter W J | O'Brien E P |
| Clarkson L | Ogilvie R |
| Clarkson W | Osborne S G |
| Connor G A | Patterson A G |
| Connor H G | Pearsall T P |
| Dunn F C | Phillips A B |
| Dynan J L | Podger C I |
| Evershed A C | Rosborough N G |
| Farley M A F | Seymour G W |
| Hammond G W | Schuh J J |
| Heath L A | Shanahan D E |
| Hore E T | Shanahan M J |
| Howse W A | Shellshear J L |
| Kelton K L | Snell E J |
| Larkin A | Strawbridge H C |
| Manning C W | Watson J E |
| Mansfield F S | Watson R H |
| Maynard T A | Wilks J W C |
| Maynard W J | Withers B |
| McCulloch W | Wolter H A |
| McDermott S | |

were surrounded and inducing them to surrender. He then sent one of the prisoners to a nearby post to tell them to surrender, which they did. The second group of prisoners was then fired upon, prompting Pte Jensen to stand on a barricade waving his helmet causing the firing to cease.

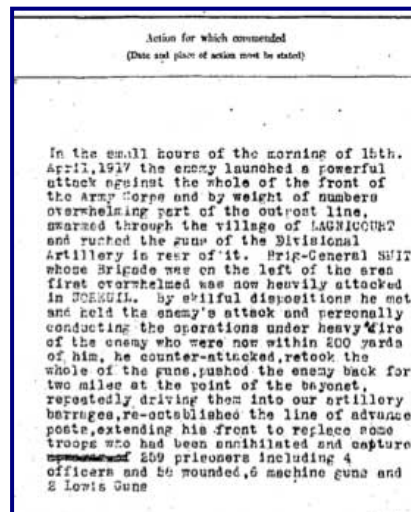
Studio portrait of Corporal Jorgan Christian Jensen VC from Port Pirie, South Australia.

Born in Denmark, he was a 24 year old labourer when he enlisted in the AIF on 23 March 1915. He served at Gallipoli with the 10th Battalion and, on returning to Egypt, transferred to the 50th Battalion and went with them to France in June 1916. He was wounded in action near Villers Bretonneux on 5 May 1918 and evacuated to England for medical treatment. He arrived back in Australia on leave on 11 October 1918 and died on 31 May 1922.



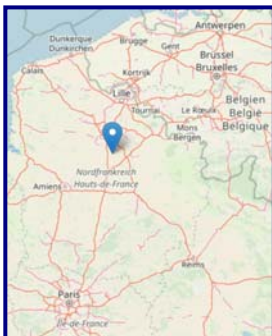
The 50th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 26 February 1916 as part of the 'doubling' of the AIF. Approximately half of its recruits were veterans from the 10th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 10th, the 50th was predominantly composed of men from South Australia. The battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the 4th Australian Division and was dubbed 'Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred', after its first CO, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Hurcombe.

These battalions of the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade were commanded by Brigadier-General Robert Smith DSO. For this successful defence at Noreuil, he received a bar to his DSO.



Brigadier-General Robert Smith DSO and Bar

In late February of 1917, the German Army in northern France retreated to the Hindenburg Line in order to shorten its line and thereby establish a more defensible position. British and dominion troops immediately followed-up this withdrawal. In order to delay their advance, and provide time for the Hindenburg Line defences to be fully prepared and manned, the Germans fortified numerous villages and towns on the approaches to the Hindenburg Line and established rearguards in them. Noreuil was one of these villages.



Noreuil location about 60km south of Lille, 170km north of Paris and 3km south of Bullecourt

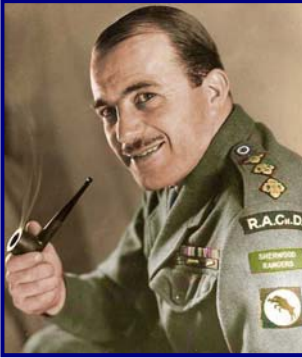
On the morning of 2 April 1917, the village was attacked by the 50th and 51st Battalions with the 49th and 52nd Battalions in support. Although the advance began well it ended disastrously because of poor planning and execution. Nevertheless, Danish-born Australian Private Jorgen Christian Jensen of the 50th Battalion was awarded the Victoria Cross for most conspicuous bravery and initiative when, with five comrades, he attacked a barricade behind which were about forty-five of the enemy and a machine gun on 2 April 1917.

After rushing the enemy machine gun post and throwing in a bomb, Pte Jensen threatened them with two live bombs telling them they



The Noreuil Australian Cemetery (pictured) contains 244 Commonwealth burials and commemoration of the First World War. Twenty-eight of the burials are unidentified and 82 graves destroyed by shell fire are represented by special memorials. These 82 are almost all of the 50th Australian Infantry Battalion.

Padre Leslie Skinner



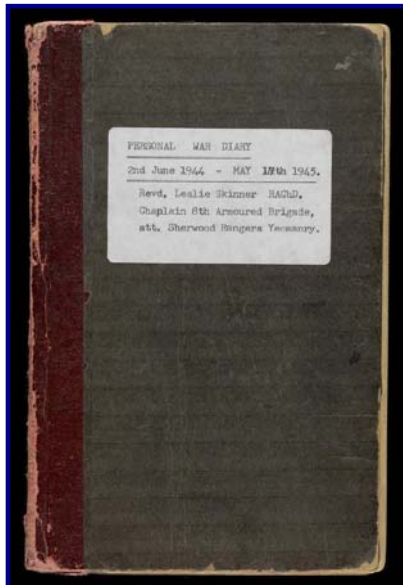
Padre Leslie Skinner

Leslie Skinner was born in York UK in November 1911, the son of a hairdresser. He joined his father's business before becoming a local preacher, and later a Methodist minister. His first church appointment, in north India in 1937, was cut short by the onset of deafness, which was to afflict him for the rest of his life.

At the outbreak of war he joined the Royal Army Chaplains Department and served in the Middle East until 1942 when he was sent home because of deafness. In 1944 he was passed fit again and posted as senior chaplain to the 8th independent Armoured Brigade and attached to the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry (a territorial armoured unit), where he remained throughout the campaign in northwest Europe.

Padre Skinner was the first British chaplain to land on the Normandy beaches on D-Day. At 0725 hours on 6 June 1944 he landed under fire at Gold Beach with the Rangers. He was injured as his landing craft hit a mine, severely wounding the men either side of him. But he quickly gathered up the wounded and arranged for their evacuation.

As a padre, Skinner was supposed to be travelling with the medical officer, but he obtained – unofficially – a motorcycle to pursue his self-appointed mission of ensuring, at whatever risk to himself, that no family member should suffer the uncertainty of having a relative reported missing, if he could possibly be traced and, if dead, given a Christian burial.



During his deployment he meticulously maintained a daily diary (pictured). In the entry for D-Day he wrote, 'Up at 0500 hours; cold, wet, sea rough. This is it. Running for the beach by 0700. 'Under fire by 0710. Beached 0725. Man either side of me wounded. One lost leg. I was blown backwards onto Bren Carrier but OK. Made it to beach, though I had hell of pain in left side. Bed on ground about 0130. Dead beat. Fell asleep beside half-track.'

On 8 June he wrote, 'Late evening Lt Verner brought in, sniper wound to left chest – serious. Doctor dressed wound and I helped evacuate Verner to Advanced Dressing Station, riding on rear door and bumper all way, holding bottle giving blood drip – nearly five miles of rough going.'

The entry for the following day: 'Spent day touring all medical units back to beach area in search of regimental casualties. News of death of Captain Keith Douglas on Fwd slopes pt 102 ... Forward on foot and found bodies of Keith Douglas and Lt Pepler. Buried separately near to where each lay. Occasional rifle fire while digging graves.'

Twenty days after landing he was wounded by a mortar shell, but within a month he returned to the regiment.

On 25 August he wrote, 'In a burst of machine gun fire I dived into a slit trench on top of a young soldier. It was his first show and he was alone. I assured him that the machine gun fire was way up in the air ... he picked up a ration box lid and held it above ground. Burst (of fire) cut it in two. It shook me. When firing stopped I moved out. He, poor devil, had to stay. About 1130 shrapnel got me across forehead and knocked me out. Lots of blood but soon conscious.'

His diary entries describe how he refused to allow tank crews any part in the work of recovering the dead from knocked-out tanks, a task which he was, all too often left to undertake alone. On 4 August he wrote, 'On foot located brewed up tanks. Only ash and burnt metal in Birkett's tank. Searched ash and found remains pelvic bones. At other tanks three bodies still inside ... unable to remove bodies after long struggle – nasty business – sick.' He described himself as an ecclesiastical undertaker.

Some other entries: 'Fearful job picking up bits and pieces and reassembling for identification and putting in blankets for burial. No infantry to help ... Squadron leader offered to lend me some men to help. Refused. Less men who live and fight in tanks have to do with this side of things the better. My job. This was more than normally sick making. Really ill – vomiting.'

He also describes in the diaries how he helped medical staff care for the sick and wounded. He talks of snipers with chest wounds, witnessing the death of comrades and dodging rifle fire while digging graves. He also notes that the German forces were respectful of the burials of Allied servicemen.

He located all but six of the fallen men of his unit and only missed out on recording the details of these men as he was away from the regiment at the time, recovering from wounds he had suffered himself.

Just before the war in Europe ended in May 1945 he detailed the discovery of Sandbostel Prisoner of War camp. His short entry said, '2,000 out of 22,000 inmates died in the last 10 days, the death rate remained at 100 a day for some time ... indescribably awful.'

He wrote to the families of each one of his unit killed in action. This resulted in correspondence, which continued for many years after the war. He was much loved within the Rangers.

Padre Skinner was twice mentioned in dispatches and received the French Croix de Guerre 1940 with palm, and the Belgian Chevalier of the Order of Leopold II with palm.

After the war he went back to France to identify war graves. He remained a member of the Territorial Army, ending his career in the London District with the rank of lieutenant colonel, the highest rank a Territorial chaplain could hold in peacetime. He returned to his ministry as a parish priest until 1977 and then as a supernumerary for a further 20 years. In 1991 he published his campaign diary, *The Man Who Worked on Sundays*—one of the most vivid and illuminating of war memoirs.

He died in October 2001, survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

Padre Skinner epitomised the selfless and compassionate service of military chaplains that transcends specific creeds and nationalities.



Chaplain Skinner and a private wrap the body of a dead soldier in sack cloth in Normandy. The photo caption states that the cigarettes were supplied as an antidote to the smell of decomposing bodies.

Article drawn from *The Guardian* 21 Nov 01, *Daily Mail* (UK) 10 May 14, *The Mirror* (UK) 12 May 14, *CHAP* magazine 4 May 20