

# Serving Faithfully



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## From the Vicar General Monsignor Peter O'Keefe AM VG EV

### A Call to Mercy

It was a very wonderful coincidence that the Church's Year of Mercy was concluding at the time of the Catholic Military Chaplains retreat held at 'The Hermitage' Marist Brothers Centre, Mittagong NSW 6-11 November.

Bishop Terry Curtin DD, Auxiliary in the Archdiocese of Melbourne led the retreat on the theme 'Mercy' which brought together much of the Church's understanding of 'Mercy', that is, being merciful is at the heart of the Gospel call and therefore necessarily is at the heart of our Catholic identity – being a merciful Church and therefore merciful people.

military members and families at the margins, identifying with them in their struggles, in their questions and uncertainties, to be with them in their hopes and failures and to journey with them towards the fullness of life in Christ.

The Holy Father addressed a group of recently-appointed bishops in Rome on 16 September, urging each of them to make their ministry a 'symbol of mercy'. As is characteristic of the Pope, he spoke in plain language stating 'The world is tired of charming liars. And, I might say, of "trendy" priests or bishops ... The people of God have the perceptiveness of God and run away when they recognise narcissists, manipulators,



*Chaplains at annual retreat, Marish Brothers Centre, Mittagong NSW, November 2016*

*L to R: Deacon Mick Flew, Fr Bryan Pipins sj, Deacon Brenton Fly, Mgr Glynn Murphy, Deacon Garth Myer, Mgr Stuart Hall, Fr Thi Lam, Mgr Peter O'Keefe, Deacon Leo Orreal, Chaplain Kevin O'Sullivan, Fr Joel Vergara, Fr Damien Ellis, Fr Stephane Sarazin, Fr Gyan Thamel, Fr Thi Lam*

This challenge to be an inclusive Church, to be a big-tented Church of inclusivity, must be at the heart and centre of our mission as a Military Diocese. Pope Francis urges us to be Church where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live according to the Gospel of Mercy.

The Pope talks about making a space for everyone, especially for those who have been hurt, excluded or alienated – the abused, divorcees, refugees, racial minorities, the alienated, the lesbians and gays, disaffected Catholics and those struggling in all sorts of ways.

Within the context of the Military, this call to mercy speaks to the heart of our Chaplains' mission. Pope Francis constantly calls us to move beyond the security of the status quo and take up the risk of going to the periphery. This call exactly sums up the Military Chaplain's call. Our mission includes accompanying those

defenders of their own causes and hawkers of vain crusades.'

Our Chaplains are numbered among the finest and are doing a magnificent job in striving to live their mission. But this retreat on the theme of 'Mercy' was a timely 'recall' to the very centre of our vocation as we walk with and represent in our persons the merciful Jesus.

Please pray for your chaplains, together with those to whom they minister the love of Jesus.

To all who have supported the Military Diocese this year: our chaplains, members of the Diocesan Finance Council, to Mrs Bruna Catanzariti, our secretary, to Antonio Di Pietro, to the editor of Serving faithfully Alan Hodges with John Pratt, and to the many who financially support the work of the diocese, THANK YOU. To you and your loved ones – a very joyful and holy Christmas.

## The Role of Chaplains



Recently, Monsignor Peter O'Keefe attended the fifty-first annual meeting of the International Military Apostolate (AMI) – held at Vught, the Netherlands 18-22 September 2016.

The AMI is an international Catholic organisation of past and serving military members recognised by the Vatican and holding NGO status. The uniqueness of this Catholic organisation is that it is lay-led by military members living out their baptismal call of Christian leadership with their national militaries.

Membership is certainly worldwide, this year attracting delegates from France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia and Austria, the United States of America, Korea, the Philippines and Australia.

One of the great benefits of such a gathering is in the meeting and hearing of each other's stories of faith within the commonality of military service.

The themes considered this year were centred on: the Church's universal consideration of Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Laudato Si* (On Care For Our Common Home) and, in particular, the Year of Mercy; the consequences of armed conflict and humanitarian relief affecting Catholic soldiers and their families; and how do Catholic soldiers live out mercy throughout their military service?

One of the most compelling addresses given at the conference was that of Archbishop Santo Marcano, Bishop of the Italian Military Ordinariate, who spoke passionately in describing the acute plight of the many thousands of refugees flooding into Europe and the required complex humanitarian response required by nations against the call of Pope Francis

for mercy. The Archbishop talked to the challenging role he faces in seeking to represent the call of Pope Francis to both the Italian Government and to its military. Most importantly, he is very concerned for the spiritual and pastoral welfare of the military personnel and civil police members of his diocese, and their families, who are dutifully carrying out their roles and living with confronting consequences of this humanities crisis. He is deeply concerned for their spirits!

The conference released the following statement in regard to this humanitarian issue and, while European-centred, it certainly speaks to the Australian reality in mercifully responding to border protection and the service of ADF

members and all those involved in the care for refugees.

*The General Assembly of the Apostolate Militaire International examined the issue of refugees in our 'common home' as described in Laudato Si by Pope Francis, from the perspective of faithful lay Catholics operating within the militaries of their various member countries. Though national leaders make the decisions about receiving refugees, it is the military who are most often involved not only in defending national borders where migrating families congregate, but also in caring for such refugees.*

*At times refugees are housed in former military camps, which the present military are sent back to*

*run. Military are often used in transporting refugees within their own nations – all while protecting them from any dangerous elements that infiltrate among them. Laudato Si calls us to show mercy, and the consensus that emerged from our discussions was that the hallmark of such mercy is deep respect in the care shown for each person, as made in the image and likeness of God.*



*Delegates at the meeting of the International Military Apostolate in the Netherlands 18-22 September 2016*

### A Gift in Your Will

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

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

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

### ***Serving Faithfully***

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

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

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

Its people are scattered widely across Australia and overseas.

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

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

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

## Over Two Decades of Service: Monsignor Stuart Hall RAN EV

**M**onsignor Stuart Hall RAN, currently Director General Chaplain–Navy and Episcopal Vicar–Navy, will separate from permanent service with the Royal Australian Navy on 19 December 2016 after 22 years and 10 months full-time service.

In January 1991, the then Fr Hall commenced his service with the Navy as a reservist chaplain, transferring to the permanent force in 1994. In 2005 Fr Hall became the Maritime Command Chaplain and later Command Chaplain Systems Command, and was appointed Director General Chaplain–Navy in November 2011. He was created a Prelate of Honour by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in 2011 with the title of Monsignor.

Mgr Stuart has had both seagoing and shore-based postings covering operational and training chaplaincy positions. These have included HMA Ships *Stirling*, *Cairns*, *Tobruk*, *Watson*, *Anzac* and *Cerberus*. In 2001 he was deployed in HMAS *Anzac* to the Persian Gulf and in 2002 attached to the Australian Headquarters East Timor.

He has served with commitment and has at all times centred himself in the Priesthood of Jesus, never seeing himself as a careerist, but living the true spirit of Catholic chaplaincy where one's priestly vocation is a call to service in the Church whether it be in a parish, diocese or in the ADF.

Mgr Stuart has been appointed Parish Priest of East Malvern, Victoria (now encompassing two parishes) and, after a good break, will commence duty in the Archdiocese of Melbourne in February 2017. This will enable him to follow his AFL team Richmond, even from afar Malvern!

The Military Diocese has not lost Mgr Stuart: he will transfer to the Navy Reserve and remain the Principal Catholic Chaplain–Navy and Episcopal Vicar–Navy. He will continue as a member of the Council of Consultors in the Military Diocese. We thank him for his enduring service and for the many gifts he brings to us.

### **Mgr Stuart has reflected on his service:**

My first posting was to HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia and soon after I had the opportunity to sea ride on HMA Ships *Torrens* and *Adelaide*, where I discovered that each ship has its unique motion. For me this meant two distinct periods in experiencing seasickness over three or four days as we sailed from Perth to Sydney. I soon had a better understanding of why the disciples of Jesus might have been annoyed with him, as he slept amidst the stormy seas. But the experience was foundational, for it gave me the opportunity to discover the trials and challenges of living in a warship, and to appreciate how sailors handle the isolation from loved ones and the importance of contributing to the seagoing community.

Over the years, as I attended the various commissioning and decommissioning of ships, I have come to realise that a ship comes alive because of the people who live and work within her. The crew are family – for better or for worse, in health or in sickness. I have had the opportunity to sail in many

ships and the one constant truth is that sailors and officers display their finest grit when they are tasked to respond to the 'cry of the distress' of people experiencing dislocation. As a Chaplain, it has been a privilege to be amongst this grit, and to lead others to appreciate the blessings and the opportunity to assist others less fortunate.

One of the abiding memories I leave with are the various deployments that have enabled me to minister in extraordinary locations, amongst the beauty of mountain ranges of Timor L'Este, and the burnt-out village homes in Dili, or at sea in any one of the oceans of the world. I remember with humbleness the frail and elderly Timorese women and men who attended the Good Friday Service, reaching out to venerate the wood of the cross. Their cataract eyes, their hands and faces lined with years of living Good Friday, and now on the verge of Easter Sunday as they prepared for independence.

Modern communications have certainly changed the face of pastoral ministry. The perceived requirement to immediately respond to various 'personal crises' often means that ministry is reactive, and the member is wanting a solution now. The idea in 'sitting with' or 'working through' the presenting pastoral concern is increasingly challenging for this generation. History and the value of tradition often only go back to

when they joined the Navy, and anything before this is classified 'in Noah's day'.

For Catholic chaplaincy, the challenge is to connect with our Catholic members who don't readily identify themselves as Catholic. The current climate within Australia, and by extension within Defence, doesn't necessarily encourage people to identify with institutional religion. Religion in the ADF is now considered to be a cultural expression within the diversity spectrum. In the Military context, Catholic ministry is often in the first instance relational rather than sacramental. However, it is at the point of Sacramental that ministry is most effective in long-term relationships. In many instances Catholic ministry is pre-evangelisation, reaching out to non-practising Catholic members. From my perspective it is disheartening and frustrating to note that the Australian Church leadership has an apparent inability to lend Priests to the Military Diocese. In many conversations with ADF senior leaders they are perplexed with this inability, especially as the Protestant and Anglican communities are lining up to fill the vacuum created by vacant Catholic positions.

When I was ordained in 1987, who would have thought the majority of my priestly ministry would be served within the military environment. I return to parish ministry, hopefully as a more grounded person who has seen the worst and the best of humanity. The people who serve in the military today still display a generosity to serve their nation, and a willingness to make a contribution towards their various communities. At the end of the day, my time in the Navy has been challenging and uniquely rewarding, with many grace-filled moments.



*Mgr Stuart Hall RAN*

## Cyril Nethery, 'Lancaster Man', rugby player and surfer



Pilot Officer Cyril Nethery

This was the obituary headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about Sydney identity Cyril Joseph Nethery who died recently.

Cyril's son Michael spoke with pride of his father at the Requiem Mass for his father. He said in part:

'The world we know today could have been very different if not for the actions of some courageous young men. They put their lives on hold. They didn't ask for what came their way, they just knew there was a job to do

and someone had to do it.

'These young men were all volunteers, they put it all on the line in the most dangerous of all theatres of war—the skies of war-torn Europe. At times they probably thought they weren't going to live for 90 minutes, much less 96 years.'

'When Cyril's father, from a Protestant Ulster family, moved to St George area he met and married an Irish Catholic girl from the Riverina and was disinherited, a happening of the times. He became a Catholic not long before he died of pneumonia aged 50, leaving the family without a breadwinner and with Cyril aged just 13.

'On the outbreak of war Cyril's elder brothers had enlisted, but his mother would not sign his papers as she already had four sons in the army. So when he turned 21, against his mother's wishes he joined the RAAF and was selected for flying school. He completed basic training in Australia and headed off to Europe.

'Through it all (20 missions flying Lancaster bombers) his faith prevailed. Cyril believed his own father was his guardian angel and, before and after every mission, whenever possible he would receive the Eucharist. His faith sustained him.'

The *Herald* obituary (27 September 2016) was written by respected Sydney sports journalist Roy Masters AM. It was a moving tribute to a man whose whole life displayed care and respect not just for his loved ones but for those around him with whom he came into contact. Excerpts from that obituary follow.

'Nethery was a "Lancaster Man", one of Sir Ralph Cochrane's elite 5 Group 50 Squadron which specialised in low-level night attacks on strategic targets, such as the V1 and V2 rocket sites, U boat Pens, armament factories and the battle ship, Turpitz.

'He flew 20 missions over enemy territory but said of his post-war flights ferrying prisoners of war, "The gratitude they showed was beyond belief." It sustained him for the rest of his life, inspiring him to be guided by the ethic, "It is better to give than receive".

'In 1947 he was having an outstanding season and was selected for the Australian tour of New Zealand, but a broken leg just prior to the team departing dashed his hopes of gaining that elusive Wallabies cap.

'The following year, Nethery decided to have one more season but was living at Cammeray and residential requirement meant footballers must play where they lived. So he had two more seasons as captain of Northern Suburbs and it was at nearby St Mary's Church, North Sydney that his Requiem Mass was held.

'A devout Catholic, he became a champion of social justice and was rewarded in 1985 with an AM for his work with the aged. He was very much involved in assisting underprivileged and Indigenous families through his work with St Vincent De Paul and was a member of the ALP for seventy years.

'Cyril attended Marist Brothers, Kogarah, excelling in maths and sport and developed a lifelong association and respect for the Marist Brothers' ethos... He played for St George rugby club where his captain was the legendary hard man 'Wild Bill' Cerrutti. But rugby was amateur and it wasn't going to put food on the table. So Cyril signed on to play Rugby League as a professional for the Dragons, prior to going away to the war. St George secretly continued to support his mother.

'The following year, Nethery decided to have one more season but was living at Cammeray and residential requirement meant footballers must play where they lived. So he had two more seasons as captain of Northern Suburbs and it was at nearby St Mary's Church, North Sydney that his Requiem Mass was held.

'A member of North Cronulla surf club before the war, Cyril also participated in the first-ever surf carnival in Great Britain. A combined Australian Services team put on an exhibition at Newquay beach, attracting a large crowd.

'In 1995, Cyril returned to Newquay, as a special guest, to celebrate 50 years of surf lifesaving in Britain.

'On the advice of his father, Michael always carries a can of fuel in the boot of his car. It's a nod to Cyril's need to help the stranded traveller, but it also symbolises those long flights back from the Ruhr valley when fuel levels were low.

After 96 years, Cyril had left nothing in his own tank. He was on empty when Valmarie held his hand for the last time, willing the old pilot to fly heavenward.

'Cyril is survived by wife Valmarie, 93, all six children – Paul, Margaret, Michael, Christopher, Frances and Lawrence – together with 12 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.'

(Extracts by permission of *Sydney Morning Herald*. Photos from Michael Nethery)



Cyril Nethery with Mother Teresa

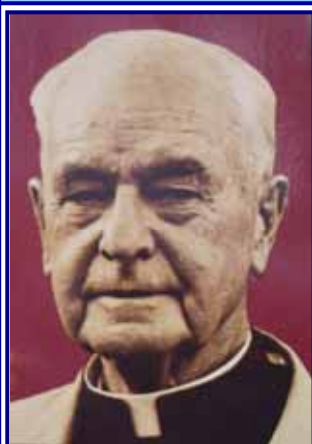


Cyril Nethery (centre) with his Lancaster flight crew



Cyril Nethery presented with his AM by former Bomber Command pilot, Governor of NSW, Air Marshal Sir James Rowland AC, KBE, DFC, AFC

## Father Steele of Tobruk



*Mgr Owen Steele OBE*

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the successful eight-month defence of Tobruk in 1941 against Rommel's forces. The defenders were the 9th Australian Division, together with the 18th Brigade of 7th Australian Division and other British and Commonwealth Troops.

The Tobruk garrison was encircled and repelled two major German attacks. During the defence, 749 Australians died and 604 became prisoners of war. The nickname 'The Rats of Tobruk' was adopted with pride after Radio Berlin said that the Australians

were 'caught like rats in a trap'. The tone of the defence was set by the Divisional Commander, Major General Morshead who said, 'There will be no Dunkirk here. There will be no surrender or retreat.'

There were about 30 chaplains serving the troops in Tobruk, of whom seven were Catholic. This is the story of one: Chaplain Owen Steele. He was born in Gympie, Queensland in August 1898. Schooling was at the Gympie Sisters of Mercy, De La Salle Brothers, Armidale NSW and Brisbane Central Technical College. His older brother Alan was Cadet number 3 in the first class at Duntroon in 1911. Alan served in Gallipoli and France and continued in the army after the war. In 1942 he was commander of the 3rd Australian Armoured Division as a Major General.

Fr Steele was ordained priest for the Archdiocese of Brisbane in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney in November 1921 and appointed as a curate at St Mary's Beaudesert. Three years later he became parish priest of a new parish, St Sebastian's, in the Brisbane suburb of Yeronga.

Just after Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on 4 September 1939 Fr Steele heard the declaration of war. He immediately saw Archbishop Duhig and was then enlisted as chaplain fourth class and became the first Catholic chaplain from Queensland to be deployed overseas in the war.

During his initial six-months training with the 2nd/9th Infantry Battalion at Redbank and Ipswich in Queensland he met Major General Morshead and developed a lasting friendship with him. After the war when General Morshead was head of Orient Shipping, he was always helpful in obtaining passage for newly-ordained priests from Rome or England.

In May 1940 Chaplain Steele sailed on the RMS *Mauretania* for the Middle East. However, the ship was diverted to UK and it was not until November that he arrived in Alexandria. On joining 9th Division in Tobruk, the chaplain was hospitalised with severe influenza. When he heard that Rommel was closing on Tobruk, he coerced Major Chalmers, the medical officer in charge, to discharge him. Just 10 minutes later German bombs destroyed the ward he had been in, killing 30 men, including Major Chalmers.

In *Altars and Artillery*, a biography of Fr Steele, he recounts the time his good friend Dr Abraham Fryberg and he were standing together. When bombing commenced they both dashed for a tunnel about 30m away, which Chaplain Steele

reached first by about 10m. Whereupon Dr Fryberg said, 'You're a man of the cloth and one of the so-called true faith, while in your eyes I'm an unbeliever. You shouldn't mind dying and going sooner than me to meet your God, and therefore you should have let me go first.' Later on Fr Steele reflected, 'I have often since said that I should have done so; for one thing the doctor had only one arm and I nearly knocked him over in the tunnel dash.'

More typical of the chaplain's manner comes from the words of Gunner C O'Sullivan who praised 'Fr Steele of Tobruk' in an article in *The Catholic Weekly*, 26 March 1942. He said:

'Tobruk and Fr Steele. One cannot be in my mind without the other. Other chaplains I have met in Tobruk and elsewhere. But in Tobruk Fr Owen Steele was all things to all men. No less ... all men in Tobruk know Fr Steele, all men needed Fr Steele, all men had possession of Fr Steele ... If Fr Steele were not wearing the cross of the chaplains, he would be wearing the red tabs of a staff officer, and what a commander he would be ... Thoughts of his own safety and welfare never occurred to him. As witness, the historic occasion when he charged in an abandoned truck, across a wide and desolate no-man's land ... Fr Steele went through on his errand of mercy, and came back, too, with a load of wounded men, some our own, some the enemy's, but all wounded men, all sorely in need of succour.'

For service in Tobruk Chaplain Steele was Mentioned in Despatches. He also received a second MID for service at El Alamein.

He recalled that there was a Requiem Mass at the cemetery at El Alamein before the troops returned to Palestine. The spontaneous response was that 2,000 attended to pray for the repose of the souls of their deceased comrades.

Fr Steele returned to his parish at Yeronga in 1943 after he was demobbed at the request of Archbishop Duhig. At the time he was a Senior Chaplain with the rank equivalent to a full colonel. By the end of the year he took up the appointment as Parish Priest of Beaudesert. He was responsible for building a

school at Beenleigh in memory of the men who served in Tobruk. A guard of honour of Tobruk veterans greeted General Morshead when he opened the school. One of the current three houses for student identity is named 'Steele'. In 1949 Fr Steele was elevated to the rank of domestic prelate, with the title of Monsignor.

Fr Steele was invited to be part of the Australian-New Zealand group to unveil a new war memorial at Tobruk on the seventh anniversary of the start of the siege. He also gave the commemorative address at the Australian War Memorial on the 25th anniversary of the siege.

The establishment of Boys Town on the outskirts of Beaudesert was due to the efforts of Fr Steele and was a source of great pride to him in helping boys who had a difficult life.

In 1958 Mgr Steele was appointed MBE in recognition of his welfare for the survivors of Tobruk. In December 1980 he was honoured with the OBE. He died in July 1981, age 82.



*Commemorative medal issued by the Rats of Tobruk Association*



*Chaplain Steele reading the Gospel at a Requiem Mass at El Alamein*

## The Role of Chaplains: a response by John Guy

In the last issue of *Serving Faithfully* Fr Emmanuel McCarthy of Brockton, Massachusetts argued against military chaplaincy. Five Australian chaplains provided counter views based on their experiences in the ADF. A further view has been provided by John Guy, a former regular Army Officer. John and his wife, Micheline, currently run an Outward Bound-type camp, 'Bush Venture' in the Gold Coast hinterland for youth at risk of suicide, drug abuse, and crime. ([bushventure.com.au](http://bushventure.com.au)),



John Guy

Does the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' preclude Christian chaplains from serving soldiers? Given my background, the issue under discussion weighed heavily on me. While serving in Vietnam as a 19-year-old Private, I found out that an SAS doctor was well remembered in the villages for his expertise and philanthropy. Indeed, now on his second tour, Major Bruce Fox had a price on his head and we were worried about him. I was due for leave, but opted to accompany Major Fox instead to see village life and to assist as an SAS medic – and to be his bodyguard.

In one village where there was no medical work, I went to the barbershop. I knew that in Vietnamese culture any one older than me would get the chair first and so I quickly realised that there could be a long wait. The elders were surprised to see that I had manners and tried to converse but we had no common language. Eventually another young man arrived and I discovered that he was a Catholic seminarian on leave and could speak Latin. As an ex-seminarian myself we conversed in an interesting mix of Latin and French. One elder then told me that this village was all Catholic and had come from North Vietnam after the French left to get away from communism. He and his peers were very grateful for what we were doing. However, now the new generation in this village were disaffected with the Saigon government and were sometimes

working with the VC. I said that I could understand this and said that to win this war would take generations and that westerners wanted a 'quick fix' and did not have the 'moral fortitude' for this type of war. He told me that we would be out of his country in five years. I protested citing the Anzac tradition but said that in five years, if he was still alive, we would be gone and he would be in a concentration camp.

He proved to be right as we did leave five years later and I found out that the old man had been put in a camp and the young seminarian had been executed. I just wondered what all that pain, suffering, and slaughter had been for. We failed to stop the violence to these Christian people and all their fellow countrymen of different faiths – therein lies the crime and the sin.

On coming home, especially when I went to University, my fellow Australians attacked me claiming that I was a murderer, child killer, and rapist – I just wondered was the world mad or was I?

I found that the Hebrew verb **רָצַח** (*ratsakh*) is the word in the original text and it is translated as 'murder', not 'kill'. Sometimes killing in war can become murder and then a war crime. For example, the need to score success with a body count in Vietnam posed a dangerous stimulus but the soldiers I was with in SAS handled this with objectivity and a moral consciousness despite the absence of any chaplaincy in our unit – I had to go AWOL to get to Mass! Looking back now, I see the value in what we did when we killed but did not murder. It would have been really helpful to have been given some pastoral care in working through all of this as a young private, but they sent me to Officer Cadet School from the battle field instead.

On top of the monumental strain of the experience of combat, there is a huge burden of other issues that confront the digger in a war – and he or she is very young. There is so much that needs to be done to prepare young people to face all of this and I do not just mean battle drills. We need chaplains, sound counselling, access to sacraments, retreats, prayer and the list goes on.

## On completing Full-time Service with Navy

Fr Thi Quang Lam is completing six years of full time service with the Royal Australian Navy and returns to the Archdiocese of Perth where he will take up a new diocesan appointment.

Fr Thi was born at Dong Nam, Vietnam and migrated to Australia in 1992 at the age of 18 years, completing his secondary education in Perth. He was ordained priest on 23 August 2003 and perhaps his association with the Navy began with his appointment as Assistant Priest in various parishes in the Archdiocese. He joined the ADF as a Reserve Navy Chaplain in October 2006, transitioning to full-time Navy in 2011. He has had seagoing postings on HMA Ships *Tobruk*, *Toowoomba* and *Warramunga* as well as shore-based postings on HMA Ships *Cerberus* and *Kuttabul*. In recent years he has been generously providing Mass and the sacraments at HMA Ships *Albatross* and *HMAS Creswell* on a regular basis in the absence of a Catholic chaplain, which has been greatly appreciated by the chapel communities. There was mutual support in these chapels as he greatly appreciated this opportunity to exercise his priestly ministry.

He was deployed with *Philippines Assist* in December 2014.

Fr Thi, although finding the transition into Navy life very challenging and sometimes very difficult, has served with great devotion and has found these last years very formative, returning to his Archdiocese a more confident and an experienced priest. He will continue to serve at *HMAS Stirling*, transferring to the Navy Reserve in 2017.

We thank Fr Thi for his generosity and willingness to serve and hope that his journey with the Military Diocese and Navy will be an enticement to other priests who may follow.

The Catholic Military Diocese also wishes to acknowledge the long and dedicated service to Navy Chaplaincy by **Fr Laurence Timms** OSA. As a member of the Augustinians Fr Laurie joined the Navy Reserve as a chaplain on 23 September 1987, retiring from ADF service this year after more than 28 years of service. Over this period he served with commitment in Sydney, Brisbane and Cairns.

Nothing has been too much for Fr Laurie; he has served unobtrusively and fervently and has always been around when needed. We wish Fr Laurie every blessing and thank him sincerely for his chaplaincy with us.

## Chaplain Damien Ellis reflects on life at the Royal Military College, Duntroon

Since I began training for the priesthood in 1996, I have moved every two to three years to a new apostolate and, with each appointment, I have arrived trusting that new horizons will unfold, new encounters will be discovered and there will be new opportunities to do God's work. Such has been the case during my chaplaincy with the Army.

Not long after returning from Afghanistan to the familiar surrounds of Puckapunyal and the small group of faithful who gathered on Sunday, I received a call from Monsignor Greg Flynn. He was calling to enquire about my interest in being posted to Royal Military College, Duntroon and, consistent with my previous response when I was posted to the School of Armour, my answer was, 'Happy to serve wherever'.

Upon arrival at the prestigious sacred turf of Army, RMC-Duntroon in early 2014, it was apparent that this place was vastly different from the close-knit community of Armoured Corps, which had been my Army family since entering Chaplaincy in 2007 with 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers. One could get

easily lost in a flagpole-abundant training establishment like Duntroon, but I was very blessed to have Deacon John Lim and his wife Anne to welcome me. Between John's extraordinary networking through the College, and indeed the whole of Canberra, and Anne's insights into the life and struggles of the families on the patch, I was very blessed. Furthermore, the team of six Chaplains, under the guidance of Chaplain Maumau Monu, created an ecumenical approach that gave witness to the college of a unity not always seen in the broader community.

Needless to say, the core business of the College is to train and mentor women and men for leadership in the Australian Army, along with the odd RAAF and foreign cadet. Over the course of 18 months or more of the cadets' training, we chaplains set about journeying with a Class from their beginning to graduation as Officers in their respective corps. This is a time to model the role of the Padre to our future commanders, a time to walk with them and their families during the highs and the lows of training and whatever else life throws at them along the way. When I was patient and alert, this journeying gave me the opportunity to see the Spirit of God at work.

On one occasion in the mess after a dining-in night for Long Tan Company, for whom I am the Padre, I seized the opportunity of *In Vino Veritas* to ask a cadet, 'Do you have a

faith?' To which he proudly informed me that just before entering RMC, he had become a Catholic. With much interest, I continued to probe. I wanted to know why—in a time when being associated with the Church is not sought by many—he had wanted to be a Christian and, in particular, a Catholic Christian. He said, 'Father, I went to Chevalier College and I knew that faith means a lot' and he went on to say that he had gone to his parish priest in Moss Vale and begun the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) program.

When he said this, I was struck with amazement and said to him, 'I saw you become Catholic and this is not a chance encounter, but God's will'. I explained to him that over the



*Fr Damien Ellis with 3rd Class RMC Cadets at the Majura Training areas ACT*

break period I had attended Mass with my mother in her parish of Moss Vale and that he was the young man I had seen initiated into the Church that morning. I had told my mother that I would be very interested to know why a young man would be making such a commitment to the faith, but the opportunity to ask did not present itself that day. I'm not sure who was more surprised, the cadet or I, but it certainly reinforced in my mind the importance of the presence of the Church minister once Catholics leave schools and parishes, and it reconfirmed for me that the

Holy Spirit does indeed work in mysterious ways.

One of the most enriching aspects of my chaplaincy would have to be the sacramental community of the ANZAC Memorial Chapel of St Paul ([www.rmchapel.org.au](http://www.rmchapel.org.au)), which provides a spiritual home to the ADF in Canberra. This spiritual home provides a place for the love of ADF members to be sanctified, for their children to be baptised and our veterans to be farewelled. This aspect is not without its challenges though. The demands of Army life can be a delicate juggling act, full of complexities, as they compete with the demands of Parish life. There lies a tension between the battle rhythm of the college with its nation-wide training, which requires the chaplain to be present for the cadets while also trying to maintain a level of commitment and availability to the faith-filled community that must share their pastor.

Three years ago I arrived not knowing what was in store for me and I will soon move over the hill to the Australian Defence Force Academy to start anew but, thanks to my time at RMC, I'll be a little better equipped. For the Officer Cadets at ADFA, I will be better positioned to advise aspiring officers what lies ahead but, with all things in life, it is not until you sojourn and allow yourself to enter into relationship with the other that you will hear the whisperings of the Holy Spirit directing you to new pathways of doing God's work.

## Christmas

In *The Spectator* on 12 December 2015 journalist Dennis Shanahan recalled some Christmas memories: 'My favourite Christmas decoration as young boy was a small brown plastic crib covered in silver sparkles with just the Holy Family and a donkey. In later life, after discovering the frescoes of St Francis in Assisi and the wonderful Italian tradition of the *presepio* which can range from a few figures in wood to thousands classed as individual art works. My long-suffering wife maintains that my insistence on buying new figures, and perhaps just a bubbling fountain, an illuminated campfire or a moving camel, every time we go to Italy is an obsession as the *presepio* grows each year and threatens to take over the dining room completely.'

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has been collecting *presepio* crèche figures since 1925 and using them to decorate a large Christmas tree, which was first displayed in 1957 and has become a much-loved annual event with subtle



The Museum website provides some historical information: 'The origin of the popular Christmas custom of restaging the Nativity traditionally is credited to Saint Francis of Assisi. The employment of man-made figures to re-enact the hallowed events soon developed and reached its height of complexity and artistic excellence in eighteenth-century Naples. There, local families vied to outdo each other in presenting elaborate and theatrical crèche displays, often assisted by professional stage directors. The finest sculptors of the period—including Giuseppe Sammartino and his pupils Salvatore di Franco, Giuseppe Gori, and Angelo Viva—were called on to model the terracotta heads and shoulders of the extraordinary crèche figures.'

'The Museum's crèche figures, each a work of art, range from six to twenty inches in height. They have articulated bodies of tow and wire, heads and shoulders modeled in terracotta and polychromed to perfection. The



The Christmas Tree and some of the beautiful presepio figures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York (images from [www.metmuseum.com](http://www.metmuseum.com) website)

changes as new figures are added. The tree glows with light and features fifty angels. Around the base is the Nativity scene of a Neapolitan crib with the three Magi, shepherds and sheep, goats, horses, a camel and an elephant, and background pieces. Also included are the ruins of a Roman temple, a number of houses, and an Italian fountain featuring a waterspout from a lion's-mask.

luxurious and colorful costumes, many of which are original, were often sewn by ladies of the collecting families and enriched by jewels, embroideries, and elaborate accessories, including gilded censers, scimitars and daggers, and silver filigree baskets.'

([metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/christmas-tree](http://metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/christmas-tree))

### Adviser for Matters of Particular Concern for Women



Mrs Paula Orreal

The Diocese has recently appointed Mrs Paula Orreal as Adviser to the Bishop and Chaplains on matters relating to women within the Australian Defence Force. Paula replaces Mrs Carmel Barnes who, as a former member of the Australian Army, was the inaugural Adviser to the Diocese in this capacity.

Paula is the spouse of Deacon Leo Orreal, currently serving in the Australian Army as the Regional Support Chaplain at Enoggera. Given her long

association within ADF family life and as one who has raised now-adult children, she has a very good understanding of the issues facing women.

The Diocese recognises that Paula cannot effect this ministry in isolation and requires a network of Catholic women throughout the ADF to really make a difference. If you are keen to add your voice in supporting this very important ministry, and be part of a women's network in the Diocese, please contact Paula at the following: [orrealclan1@yahoo.com](mailto:orrealclan1@yahoo.com)

**F**ather of all love  
and compassion,  
in the silence of the night  
you sent forth  
your only – begotten Son as  
**Saviour of the World,  
Prince of Peace.**  
**May Christ be born anew  
in our hearts this Christmas**

So that our lives may be  
transformed by your grace and  
our troubled world  
may know again

**the gift of your peace.  
AMEN.**

Wishing you the blessings of the Holy  
Family at Christmas  
and through each day of the  
New Year



This prayer was written by Bro. Michael Marcotte, O.S.B.