



BISHOPRIC OF THE FORCES

Pastoral Letter on Military Chaplaincy

FEAST OF ST JOSEPH THE WORKER, 19 MARCH 2012

We all remember the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to this country in 2010. Many will recall the celebration of Mass in Birmingham, during which the Holy Father beatified Cardinal John Henry Newman. Newman was blessed with great intellect and understanding. He also possessed a deeply pastoral heart. Blessed John Henry Newman wrote a prayer that finds a resonance in the minds and hearts of many. This prayer speaks of the “definite service” to which each one of us is called.

I invite you all to reflect upon the “definite service” that is Military Chaplaincy. This is a priestly ministry that is vital to the needs of the Military community. Every member of the Armed Services, together with their families, will have benefited from the ministry of their chaplain. This is especially the case when personnel are deployed on operations. The chaplain’s presence amongst them speaks of the Hope of the Gospel message. Families, waiting at home for the return of their loved ones, know the support of our chaplains during this testing time. The relationship that is built up between the chaplain and those in his care is a source of comfort and strength. The celebration of Mass and the Sacraments is assured and the listening ear of the chaplain and his presence amongst his people exemplifies priestly life in a most powerful way.

For the majority of Dioceses in the United Kingdom, prayer for vocations is a key theme of daily Catholic life. The Bishopric of the Forces is no exception. There is a real shortage of chaplains in all three of our Armed Services.

Military Chaplaincy is a particular vocation. While a number are called to Priesthood, not every priest is called to be a Military Chaplain. However, there are those for whom this would be a very real possibility. It is a vocation to be discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; a “definite service” to which some will be called.

What is our response to this current situation? As Catholics, our first response must always be prayer. No matter how much we may encourage priests to think about service in to our Military community, all will come to nought unless it is built on the foundation of fervent prayer.

This year sees the Bishopric celebrate 25 years as a Military Ordinariate. I invite you to join with me in making this year a time of special prayer for an increase in vocations to Military Chaplaincy. I have also written to all the communities of enclosed religious across the country, asking them to support us with this intention for prayer. A supply of prayer cards is available and the prayer also appears on our Bishopric Website. Please make this prayer your own, making this very special intention a part of your daily prayer.

Bishop Richard Moth

RC Bishop of the Forces