
100 Years

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In the Army there are many who perform heroic deeds
our proud history has stories brave to tell.
And then others in the Army's ranks
are there to serve their needs
in their daily lives and godly needs as well.

The chaplains in the Army are a dedicated group
they've served our soldiers for 100 years.
As confessors, friends and mentors
to their company or troop
sharing times of laughter, blood, sweat and tears.

There were chaplains at Gallipoli
as men bled upon the shore,
there were chaplains with the Rats of Tobruk.
There were chaplains in the trenches
in the horror, blood and gore
giving solace as the ground around them shook.

In Bougainville, Namibia, Iraq and Vietnam,
in Korea and East Timor, World War II.
In Rwanda and Somalia
and in Afghanistan
the chaplains have been with them through and through.

In their service they are thankful
just to be the soldiers' friend,
they're not in it for the medals or rewards.
They continue so these diggers know
God's love will never end,
they are happy that the glory is the Lord's.

Now the chaplains are approachable,
for that the troops give thanks,
that's why they're known affectionately as Padre.
And the last two decades have included
women in their ranks,
and they in turn are sometimes known as Madre.

There are padres at Kapooka
when the young recruits arrive,
to support them as they face their brave new world.
And the padres at Duntroon
will help the Staff Cadets survive
as command responsibilities are unfurled.

As the leaders of tomorrow face the hardships of today
and on courage and endurance they depend.
While their character is tested in their struggles day by day
they know the padre's there to be their friend.

Yes the padre can be called on in a hundred different ways
as their Ministry of Presence so evolves.
And the soldiers, they respect him,
and they're happy that she prays
for the welfare of their young immortal souls.

There are christenings of children
and it happens now and then
that a soldier also asks to be baptised.
At a river or the ocean it's a special moment when
this new Christian stands with heaven in his eyes.

There are times when as a nation
that a sorrow great is ours
when we hear in war of soldiers that we lose.
And the padre will be called on in those agonising hours
when they have to give a loved one tragic news.

And the padre will stay with them
as the family sadly grieves
and support them in the tasks they have to do.
In their sorrow and heart-brokenness the padre still believes
that God understands the pain they're going through.

But other times are full of joy as when a child is born
or asked to lead a wedding celebration.
And on Anzac Day the chaplain
leads a service in the dawn
recalling sacrifice that built a nation.

From day to day the padres
do their work behind the scenes
supporting every level of command.
They're ready to be called on in their everyday routines
to listen, say a prayer or lend a hand.

In the annals of our country where our stories are all told
and there's mention of devotion, love and mystery.
Perhaps within these records a small legend will unfold
of the padres who have played their part in history. ■