

**Obituary for**

**Monsignor Edward Peter Hill**

**8th August 1943 – 12th August 2022**

**Edward Peter Hill**, known to many as Ted, was born in Epsom on 8th August 1943. He was one of three children, a brother John and sister Eileen born to his parents. Edward was educated at the John Fisher School, Purley and then went firstly to Mark Cross Junior Seminary before completing his formation for the Priesthood at St. John’s Seminary, Wonersh. He was ordained as a priest for the Archdiocese of Southwark at the Church of Saint Cecilia, North Cheam on 18th July 1968 by Archbishop Cyril Cowderoy.

Father Edwards’s first appointment was to the parish of St Saviour Lewisham. He arrived there on 3rd August 1968 and served as assistant priest until September 1972 when he was appointed as assistant priest in the parish of St Thomas a Becket, Wandsworth. He remained in Wandsworth where he is still remembered by older parishioners until August 1978 when Archbishop Michael Bowen appointed him as an assistant priest in the parish of St Peter the Apostle, Woolwich. He was a very active assistant priest in all his appointments and held in high esteem.

In 1982 a new calling came to Father Edward and he offered his services to the Military Diocese of Great Britain as a chaplain with the Royal Air Force. He began his basic training with the RAF on 10th September. This was to begin 21 years of service with the Royal Air Force in various bases both at home and abroad. He was a popular chaplain and was very much at home in the various Air bases he was assigned to. Father Edward saw the real need of the role of the Military Chaplain and the importance of the pastoral presence of a Roman Catholic Priest to minister to those on active service. In a note to Archbishop Michael in November 1984, the then Bishop to the Forces wrote describing Father Edward as “a good solid type, not easily disturbed or upset”.

In 1988 Father Edward was appointed as Assistant Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain to the RAF. In his letter to Father Edward on learning of the appointment, Archbishop Michael Bowen wrote “My warmest congratulations on your appointment as Assistant Principal Chaplain. This is good news for Southwark and for you and I am immensely pleased. You seem to be happy at the prospect of spending more time in England and of being ‘parish priest’ at RAF Wyton, an experience which I am sure you value”.

Father Edward returned briefly to the Diocese in 1993 to join Archbishop Michael Bowen at the Cathedral for the annual Mass for Jubiliarians to mark his own Silver Jubilee of Ordination to the Priesthood. He also offered a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Church where he had been ordained, St Cecilia’s North Cheam

In 1997 Father Edward was appointed as Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain to the Royal Air Force and Vicar General to the Bishopric of the Forces. He was also created a Prelate of Honour by Pope St John Paul II. In a letter to Monsignor Edward, Archbishop Michael wrote “Congratulations on your appointment as Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain to the Royal Air Force. The diocese is very pleased with this. It is a well merited recognition of your excellent work in the RAF and I wish you well in your new responsibilities.” Monsignor Hill was inducted as Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain at a ceremony at the Holy Family Church, RAF Halton, presided over by the Bishop of the Forces, The Right Reverend Francis Walmsley, and attended by Bishop Howard Tripp, representing Archbishop Michael Bowen, and by Canon Charles Walker, Father Gerry Flood and Father Niall Thornton. Monsignor Hills mother, Eileen was also present.

In November of that same year, Bishop Walmsley sent Archbishop Bowen a copy of a letter he had received from Air Vice Marshall R P O’Brien of the RAF Personal Management Agency. The letter contained the following “ You will be pleased to learn that Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to appoint Monsignor Edward Hill as one of her honorary chaplains. This appointment will date from 10th December 1997”. Bishop Walmsley was keen to point out that this was a unique appointment, Monsignor Edward was the first Roman Catholic Priest in the RAF to be given this honour. In his letter to Monsignor Ted, Archbishop Michael wrote “I have just heard from Bishop Francis Walmsley about your appointment as an honorary chaplain to the Queen, and that it is the first for a Roman Catholic Priest in the RAF. I am really delighted about this. It is something really very special for us all and I am proud that you have received this honour.

In 1999, due to ill health, Mgr. Ted offered his resignation as Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain and Vicar General which was accepted. He remained in the RAF as a civilian chaplain based at RAF Brize Norton.

In October 2002 Archbishop Michael saw Monsignor Ted to discuss his future ministry in the diocese and in January 2003 he wrote asking him to take on a new appointment as Parish Priest of St Andrew’s, Tenterden. In his letter the Archbishop wrote “I would like to take this opportunity to say how pleased I am to have you back in the diocese and I look forward to seeing you again in due course. I know that in your years as chaplain in the Royal Air Force you have been hugely appreciated. You have done great work for the Church and have been an excellent representative of the diocese in the Air Force. Thank you so much for all this. I wish you well in Tenterden and hope that you will be very happy in your ministry there, different as it may be in many ways from the past 21 years. Monsignor Ted arrived in the parish in April 2003 and was inducted as parish priest on 10th June 2003 by Bishop John Hine.

For the next Eleven years he was a very active and much loved parish priest. During his time in the parish the Parish of Tenterden celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the opening of St Andrew’s Church in November 2010 and then a year later the parish marked the completion and blessing of the new parish Hall which was formally blessed on 4th December 2011. Both of these events were celebrated with the Archbishop of Southwark, The Most Reverend Peter Smith. Sadly Mgr. Ted was not very well at the Mass for the blessing of the new parish hall, but attended the mass but did not concelebrate. In his letter to Monsignor Ted, Archbishop Peter wrote “I am very sorry that you were unwell when we came down at the weekend and I thought you were very brave at being present at the Mass”

Monsignor Hill continued to serve as parish priest and also as much respected member of the deanery. In his visitation report of September 2009, Bishop John Hine wrote “my overall impression of the parish of Tenterden is of a happy, well-established parish, supportive of their clergy and well-led by their parish priest.

However Monsignor Hills health had begun to decline and sadly he was forced to offer his letter of resignation to Archbishop Peter in September 2013. “My poor health in recent times has led me to this decision”. In his reply Archbishop Peter wrote “I fully understand and appreciate that your poor health in recent times has led you to come to this decision. In the meanwhile may I take this opportunity to thank you for your 45 years of priestly ministry, both in the diocese and for your many years as a chaplain in the Royal Air Force. In that latter role you were highly regarded and respected which led to you being appointed as a Principal Catholic Chaplain in 1988. You have been a wonderful example of faithful priestly ministry over all those years, and especially in your determination to continue despite your failing health. So it is only right that you should be relived of the responsibilities of being parish priest.

Monsignor Hill retired as parish priest in January 2014 and moved to Holy Cross Priory, East Sussex where he was to live out the rest of his life. In 2018 he celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his Priestly Ordination with a Mass at Holy Cross Priory Church.

He remained in touch with his many friends in the diocese and from his RAF days.

His health was always a cause for concern and he was admitted to the Conquest Hospital, St Leonards on Sea, Hastings, a few days before his death. Sadly, although the operation was successful there were complications and he died on the evening of Friday 12th August at 9.20pm.

Monsignor Edward Hill, Ted to his friends, was a faithful and dedicated priest, devoted to his parishioners. His life of service was an example to many and his witness to the role of the priest in the Armed Forces an inspiration for many. As a Chaplain in the Royal Air Force Monsignor Edward Hill did much to provide spiritual support, pastoral care, and moral guidance to Catholic servicemen, women and their families. In the words of the present Bishop to the Forces, Bishop Paul Mason “*Military chaplains need to stand alongside the people that they serve. From that point you build trust, and once you have built trust, you’re in a far better position to be able to explore with people the nature of their own faith, their own spirit and to support and help to them”*.

Monsignor Edward Hill did just that, for over 21 years as a priest working in the Armed Forces and as a parish priest he lived out his commitment to the people he was sent to serve, to offer mass each day for them, to bring them the Sacraments of the Church, to teach and to break open with them the Word of God, but most of all to be an icon of the Lord Jesus to them and to show them the love and the mercy of God.

Monsignor Edward was that Good and faithful servant who spent his life, his life of service, serving the Lord he loved. He was called to share in the Sacred Order of the Priesthood, to serve the people as a priest and to share in the joys and burdens of their lives. We ask the Lord to look now with mercy upon him and give him the rewards of his labours, the fullness of life promised to those who preach his Holy Gospel.

Monsignor Edward Hill, who died on the evening of 12th August 2022, in his 79th year and in the 54th year of his priesthood.

**May he rest in peace**