

- 1 In 1939 several nations were at war with Hitler, to try to prevent him taking over other countries. By the summer of 1940, only the English Channel stopped the Germans invading Britain. Hitler's invasion plans (called "*Operation Sealion*") were put into effect, and men and boats were assembled, ready to invade.
- 2 The British Royal Air Force would, first of all, have to be destroyed. Germany's Air Force (led by Hermann Goering) had over 2,600 planes. The R.A.F. under Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, had less than a quarter of that number - no more than 650 planes. Britain's radar early-warning stations were a very great help.
- 3 The first heavy attack took place on 10th July 1940, and then wave after wave of fighter-escorted bombers attacked the ships and the harbours of the south coast, as well as the airfields. The Battle of Britain had begun - the first battle to take place only in the skies.
- 4 One night, a single German bomber lost its way and jettisoned its bombs - they landed on London, which had not previously been hit. In retaliation, British bombers attacked Berlin the following night. Hitler was so outraged at the attack on his capital city, that he switched the Luftwaffe's bombing away from the English airfields to London itself. Although this was a tragedy for London, it gave an opportunity for the R.A.F. to build themselves up again and then destroy many more German planes on their way to London.
- 5 The British had been very close to defeat, and Winston Churchill, the war-time Prime Minister, said of the Royal Air Force: "*Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.*" This was the first battle that Hitler lost.
- 6 Today is called '*Battle of Britain Day*', acknowledging that Britain would have been invaded sooner or later if it had not been for the courage and skill and sacrifice of the R.A.F. pilots.
- 7 *Let us pray:*
Lord Jesus,
we can understand your feelings
when your friends abandoned you
and left you alone
when times were difficult.
We ask that we, too,
may have strength and courage
in the difficult times that we will face.
Inspire us to live in such a way
that we are prepared
to be one of only a few,
willing to make sacrifices
and stand up for what is right.
Lead us to work well with others
and help bring out the best
in one another,
and readily thank those
who contribute to our lives. Amen.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org