

# DIOCESE IN EUROPE

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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

The Bishop in Europe:  
The Right Reverend Dr. Robert Innes



**Lent 2019**

## AD CLERUM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

### 1. A Diocesan Rule of Life

Bishops are periodically encouraged to gather together for training and development. At one such recent gathering, we were asked to share what, in secular society, we thought the church had distinctively to offer: what was our unique selling point? There could have been many answers. But this largish group settled on one thing: a rhythm and pattern to life. People's lives are increasingly dislocated, dominated by long working hours and affected by instant communications and the corollary of continuous availability. People feel out of sorts with natural rhythms be they daily, weekly or seasonal. For stressed and dislocated modern people, the deep traditions of Christian faith offer a pattern, a rhythm and a sense of balance. These rhythms are sustained especially in monastic communities, with their continuous round of worship and their attention to work, rest and prayer. But the ancient wisdom embodied by the monasteries can be more generally shared and practised. There are some who choose an associate monastic status – a good number within our diocese are third order Franciscans. But there could be very many more who would benefit from arranging their lives more self-consciously according to a Christian pattern. To encourage this, we are commending the adoption of a Diocesan Rule of Life'.

It is sourced in the Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus and has four elements:

- Knowing God (especially through a commitment to regular worship)
- Growing in Christ (through prayer and study of the scriptures)
- Building community (through sharing our time, treasure and talents)
- Living beyond ourselves (in specific ways of connecting our faith with the world).

You will find attached a theological rationale for the rule of life, a graphic which summarised the rule well, and a new 'diocesan prayer' which we have road-tested in a number of archdeaconry synods which we commend to your use. The preparation of the rule of life, along with the theological reflection and prayer, have been led by Dr Clare Amos, the Diocesan Director of Lay Discipleship, and we thank her for this work.

We encourage you to think about this, and to see how it connects with the life of your own chaplaincy. Some chaplaincies have already introduced local rules of life for their people and found them helpful. If you have already done this, do think about whether you could connect your local rule with this diocesan rule. Or if this is new to you, think about how you could introduce it. Maybe you could preach on one element of the diocesan rule of life for each of four weeks during Lent?

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You will find attached a graphic which summarises the diocesan rule of life well. You will also find a new ‘diocesan prayer’ which we have road-tested in a number of archdeaconry synods, and which we commend to your use.

## 2. Living with Brexit

It seems a very long time ago since Referendum Day, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016. Since then, very many in our Diocese have been living in a kind of limbo, not knowing what the implications of the fateful decision by the UK to leave the EU would be. The UK government triggered Article 50 without a plan. We are now in the extraordinary position of still not doing whether there will be an orderly withdrawal on March 29<sup>th</sup>, whether there will be a disorderly exit, or whether the exit will be postponed for an unknown period. We are deeply conscious of the strains and stresses this has imposed on you our clergy, and upon individuals, families and businesses within our European diocese. Brexit touches many areas of the lives of UK citizens including residence rights, health care, pensions, pet passports, driving licences, business contracts and employment. This is in addition to the profound questions of identity and belonging that many of us have experienced.

As a diocese, we have continued to advocate strongly for the needs of UK citizens in the EU, in particular through Dame Caroline Spelman, a member of the UK Parliament and the “ Second Church Estates Commissioner” whose role is to be the link between the UK Parliament and the Church of England. One of the most promising recent political developments has been the amendment tabled on 27<sup>th</sup> February by Alberto Costa MP, calling on the Prime Minister to seek at the earliest opportunity a joint UK-EU commitment to adopt the part of the Withdrawal Agreement securing the rights of EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU, whatever the Brexit outcome. His amendment was passed with the support of the government and gives real hope that the needs of ordinary people are at last being taken seriously. The European Union may well be reluctant to conduct a ‘mini-negotiation’ with the UK on these issues while the whole Withdrawal Agreement remains in the balance. However, it is encouraging to see a number of Governments across the EU27 have irrespective started issuing reassurances guaranteeing reciprocal citizens’ rights.

As we grapple with how to respond, the formula CARE (Communicate, Articulate, Reconcile, Enable) provides a possible framework:

**Communicate:** Sharing with one another, with local groups and organisations of UK nationals, with UK embassy staff, our questions and concerns. To be aware of those who are isolated, confused or at risk in our communities.

**Articulate:** our feelings and anxieties. To find the right words of hope that speak beyond the anger and disappointment that many people are feeling.

**Reconcile:** Brexit reflects and further exacerbates deep divisions in British society and this may be projected into our own chaplaincies where there are many British members. This challenges us to ensure that our churches continue to be places of inclusion, where cultural and linguistic difference is affirmed and celebrated, and all attempts to exclude and divide are challenged by our calling to become a single new humanity in Christ.

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**Enable:** To encourage those who are British living in the EU to seek to strengthen that identity in narrative based on a commitment to the common good and a desire to be enriched and enlarged by life together with their neighbours.

Thank you for your ministry in helping create lifegiving patterns and rhythms in your own local context within the diocese and for supporting UK ex-patriots at a worrying and unsettling time. We wish you a blessed celebration of Holy Week and Easter.

Yours sincerely,

+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe

**+Robert Gibraltar in Europe**

+ David

**+David Hamid**

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