

# DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

The Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe  
**The Right Reverend Dr Robert Innes**



3 February 2020

The Suffragan Bishop in Europe  
**The Right Reverend David Hamid**

To the Clergy of the Diocese

Dear Sisters and Brothers

There may be growing concern in the diocese as we hear of the spread of the coronavirus around the world. The disease appears to present a particular risk to elderly people and those with a pre-existing health condition. We therefore, out of concern for the wellbeing of all members of our chaplaincies, wish to share some advice related to liturgical and pastoral practice which may help to keep our churches as safe as possible, not only from this particular outbreak but from infectious diseases in general.

1. Priests presiding at the Eucharist, communion administrators and servers are reminded to follow **proper hand washing and hand sanitizing techniques**. We strongly advise the use of hand sanitizers immediately before the Preparation of the Table and Eucharistic prayer.
2. Intinction, often thought to be a practice at the time of communion which reduces the risk of contagion, may actually increase such risk. **Our hands are far more likely to be a source of contagious pathogens than lips**. Thus intincting (dipping) the consecrated bread into the chalice introduces any germs on our hands into the consecrated wine. Should a communicant not wish to drink from the chalice then he or she ought to receive the consecrated bread alone. It is Anglican teaching that to receive the sacrament in one kind only is to receive the sacrament in its entirety.
3. Furthermore, with regard to intinction, in some of our congregations there are those who may be particularly vulnerable due to certain immune or allergic conditions. For instance, those with gluten intolerance for whom traces of gluten can be hazardous are at greater risk when other communicants have dipped their communion wafer into the wine.
4. In welcoming and greeting each other in church and as we exchange the Peace we will often shake hands. By washing hands thoroughly before leaving home and by using antiseptic rinses or gels we can help to reduce the risk of infection significantly.
5. Pastoral visitors to homes and hospitals should observe all precautions in personal hygiene before and after such visits.

While it does not appear that we should be unduly alarmed, the World Health Organisation has declared the outbreak of coronavirus to be a global emergency, so we commend these good practices to you in the meantime. If there are further significant developments, we will update any advice and guidance, likely via the website.

We encourage all to pray for those infected by the coronavirus in China and around the world, for those who care for them, for health specialists and authorities who are combatting the spread of infection, and of course for all who at this time are feeling anxious, especially for those with friends and family in China.

Yours in Christ

+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe

+ David

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