

Canopy of Prayer

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contributor

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Dear praying friends in Europe

How do you 'love your neighbour as yourself' the second greatest commandment? Recently in my daily Bible readings with commentary by Nicky Gumble, he shared the story of Chiara Lubich, a teenager in Italy during the last war and founder of the Focolare movement. Chiara said this: "Love the other person as yourself... Imagine how the world would be if the golden rule were put into practice not only between individuals, but also between ethnic groups, peoples and nations, if everyone loved the other country as their own." Now there's a challenge for all European countries in the coming months. Let us remember as we pray, that along with "love the Lord your God" and "love your neighbour as yourself" Jesus says "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:40)



This month sees an important phase in the negotiations for the UK to leave the EU. What is decided over the next few weeks will have a profound effect not only on the UK but also on the EU and Europe itself.

One of the challenges I have faced over the past 20 years as a Brit called to minister within the European institutions has been to recognise that even as

Christians we have many different views on what is God's will for Europe. Often the caricatures that are painted of the EU institutions in particular, bear little resemblance to the realities I have seen over the years; individuals from 28 nations working together, crossing boundaries of language, culture, difficult histories, laying down those things that have divided us as nations and ethnic groups in the past. All this with the purpose of discovering ways forward to reduce that which divides, whether by regulations that enable easy access to markets, or the free movement of people so that those differences might become opportunities which promote peace and a deeper understanding of our shared heritage across a continent that has seen too much conflict.

As part of the EU, the UK played a significant role in how the EU has developed and operates today, and has continued to contribute to that shaping as time has passed since the signing of the Maastricht treaty, which laid the foundation for the EU as we know it today. As a full member we have been able to look after our national interests, and have maintained opt-outs e.g. our decision not to be part of the Euro, nor of the Schengen Area (an area without border controls), or our decision to delay implementation of the Social chapter until a time of our own choosing.

The UK leaving the EU will make us all poorer; in the economic and regulatory sense this is disputed by some, but from a relational perspective this will certainly be true. For when trust is lost it is hard to regain. One thing we should all learn from this experience - it is easy to divide and be divided, but it is far more difficult to sort out a divorce without acrimony. Perhaps this is why Jesus put such emphasis on loving your neighbour as yourself. As Europeans we have all benefited in some way or other over the past 40 years from our partnership, whether it be from the opportunities of free movement to find jobs, enjoying the experience of travel to places that 40 years ago were closed to many of us, or from EU financial support to a local community or infrastructure project. Also, let's not forget the peaceful means of resolving differences in a continent with a history of terrible conflict. As in any partnership, sometimes the benefits come with a cost but in the end we have all been enriched in some way or another.

In the crucial days to come, let's lift our leaders in the UK and rest of Europe before His throne of grace in prayer, so that at the end of this process we will have sought to fulfil the prayer from 1Timothy 2:1-2, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." Surely this must be the prayer for our continent at this time.

Prayer

Pray blessing and wisdom on our leaders – specifically Theresa May, Donald Tusk, Dominic Raab and Michel Barnier.

Pray for humility on all sides so that mistakes of the past are not repeated in the future.



The **Austrian government's priorities** for its presidency of the EU are:- *security* (the fight against illegal immigration by securing external borders), *maintaining Europe's competitiveness* through digitisation and *stability* in Austria's neighbouring countries (working towards EU accession for Western Balkan countries).

Between 21st - 25th Oct. the **EU of Prayer** will be meeting in Vienna to pray for this country's 6 month presidency of the EU.

Please also pray for:-

- The most recent warning from the global climate experts is alarming. Pray for good judgement and a sense of responsibility among the leaders and everybody
- The Budgets Committee of the EP has voted to freeze **EU support for the Palestinian Authority** until hatred against Jews is removed from their schoolbooks. Pray that this decision will be confirmed in the EP plenary later this month

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