

DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

BISHOP'S LENT APPEAL 2015

Earlier this month I travelled to Athens. During my stay I had the opportunity to visit two detention centres on the outskirts of the city where irregular migrants are held. One of the centres is a dedicated facility for unaccompanied minors. The other is an adult prison, with a sector set aside for unaccompanied minors. The young people I met were mainly from Afghanistan and Pakistan; some were from the Middle East and a few were from Africa.

What these youngsters have in common is that they have all fled, for good reason, from their home countries. They are not criminals. But they are being held in prison conditions, for periods of 18 months or more. The conditions, particularly at the adult prison, were appalling. The children were kept in containers surrounded by gravel and razor wire. They lacked proper shoes. They had no entertainment – not even a football. They looked thin and some were evidently traumatised. I was truly shocked that, in modern Europe, children are being kept in these kinds of conditions.

This situation contravenes the basic rights of the child. But, of course, Greece has no money and migrants are at the bottom of the pile. Children are put in detention centres because there is nowhere else for them to go.

The Greek Orthodox Church is doing what it can to provide assistance. In particular, they have set up and are operating a reception centre for unaccompanied refugee minors.

My appeal for Lent 2015 is therefore devoted to “Hestia”, (meaning “Home”) a hostel for unaccompanied minor refugees in Athens.

“Apostoli”, a social action charity operating under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Church offers Hestia as a safe place for unaccompanied children and young adolescents. The Hostel can accommodate up to 20 residents. Since its foundation, in 2012, it has supported more than 100 children and young people. It currently looks after children from Syria, Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Gambia and Guinea.

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Charity Commission registration number: 250186

As well as food and lodging, the Hostel provides basic social and health care services. Young refugees also benefit from activities aimed at their social integration, such as schooling, occupational therapy, participation in several educational and cultural activities and basic training in the Greek language.

The cost of running the hostel is 25,000euros per month. The hostel is supported by various partners and by an EU programme. However, there are difficulties in sustaining the continuity of some funding streams. So extra funding is urgently needed.

The Greek Orthodox Church greatly values its partnership with the Anglican Church. I hope we can make this partnership real, through offering some sponsorship of Apostoli's 'Hestia' hostel.

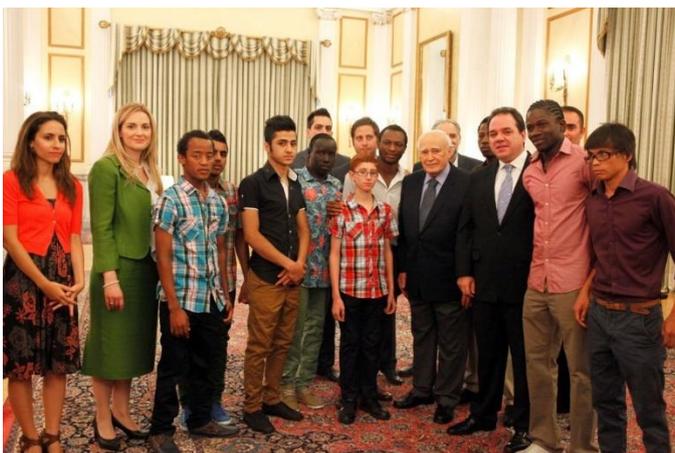
Please do consider this project for your charitable giving and/or bring it to the attention of your mission committee. This is a very practical way in which our diocese can come to the aid of some of the most vulnerable children in Europe. Money collected for the Lent Appeal should be sent, as usual, to the Diocesan Office.



With every blessing,

+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe

+Robert Gibraltar in Europe



'Some of the young people of Hestia with H.E. The President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr Karolos Papoulias, at the Presidential Palace.'