



## Diocese in Europe

Bishop Robert has suggested that given this anniversary year and the ecumenical celebration of Easter on 20 April, chaplaincies consider dropping the so-called *filioque* clause of the Nicene creed at Easter and possibly on other Sundays (e.g. Trinity Sunday). Father Nevsky, Chaplain in Bucharest, prepared a briefing note for his chaplaincy council about it and he has kindly shared it in case it is of help to other chaplaincies.

### ***Filioque* – a briefing paper** (February 2025)

This year marks the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. This was the first Ecumenical Council and was an important milestone in affirming the faith and ecclesiology of the Church. The Nicene Creed, by which we declare our faith every Sunday, has its origins in the work of this Council.

In the Nicene Creed, we say:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.

The phrase, 'and the Son,' (Latin, *filioque*) in this clause were added to the text of the creed at the Council of Toledo in 539 and was widely accepted into the texts used in the Western Church. It became normative in the English Church following the Council of Hatfield in 680. The Greek-speaking East never accepted this addition to the text of the creed, and over time the disagreement contributed to the Great Schism of 1054.

In his *Ad Clerum* of 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2025, Bishop Robert has suggested that Chaplaincies consider dropping the phrase 'and the Son' from the Nicene Creed this year. The Lambeth Conference of 1988 recommended this, and various member churches of the Anglican Communion no longer use the *filioque* clause in the text of the creed. In the Church of England, our canons currently permit both variations.

The theological issue at stake is whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, or from the Father and the Son. It is an issue of Trinitarian theology. The Scriptural witness can be invoked to support either position. Compare, for instance, John 14.26 and John 15.26. The Anglican position following the Dublin Statement 1984 is that the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit is not a dogma *required* of Christians, but that it is an acceptable belief. Nevertheless, there are good historical and ecumenical reasons for removing the *filioque* clause. In essence, the Church, both East and West, equally hold to the Trinitarian faith in its essentials.