

# One Church, One Journey

A process of ecclesial renewal

2020-2024



[journey.church.mt](http://journey.church.mt)

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Message by Archbishop Charles Jude Scicluna  
on the official launch of the document

# One Church, One Journey

It is with great pleasure that today, the Solemnity of the most Blessed Trinity, I am formally launching the document *One Church, One Journey*. The document is a hope-filled reflection for the Church in Malta and initiates a process of renewal inspired by this vision.

I am grateful to all those who contributed to bringing this document to life, including its multiple revisions especially after the sudden changes that we all experienced during these past months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*One Church, One Journey* offers a vision of becoming “Church” rooted in that promoted by Pope Francis in particular in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*. Its presentation of a process of renewal is a local interpretation of the Pope’s own desire for renewal in the universal Church. The document also indicates the specific processes that the Archdiocese is committing itself to implement in these next four years.

I call upon all entities of the Church in Malta—parishes,

religious congregations, schools, lay movements, families and all others—to be imbued by the spirit of this vision and to journey together as one Church on this process of discernment. The renewal that we all hope for is not something being imposed from above, but will flourish organically, in all sectors of the Church in Malta, as it grows and unfolds in many aspects.

As from today, this document is accessible online on the website of the Archdiocese of Malta **journey.church.mt**. I invite you all to read through it so that we may all participate in this process of ecclesial renewal. Enlightened and led by the one Spirit, as one Pilgrim People, we will continue to write the story of our local Church that began when St Paul, the Apostle himself, was welcomed on our shores. Always grateful that he brought to us the Word of salvation, we ask for his intercession to continue protecting our country and the Church in Malta.

+ Charles J. Scicluna

June 7, 2020  
St Paul’s Grotto, Rabat, Malta

Ecclesial renewal will flourish organically, in all sectors of the Church, not because it is imposed from above, but as it unfolds in many aspects.



# Welcome


At the Diocesan Assembly of November 2018, when the local Church reflected on our present ecclesial reality by looking back at the outcome of the 2003 Documents of the Diocesan Synod, Archbishop Charles Jude Scicluna proposed the Lukan post-resurrection narrative of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-36) as the inspiration for a process of ecclesial discernment towards pastoral reform.

The following year, a draft document of this process, a method of reflection divided in eight steps, was presented at the Diocesan Assembly of 2019. Its intent was

that, eventually, it would guide every entity in the Church in the same process towards communal discernment. The document evolved over months through many encounters with constituents in the Church that offered a snapshot of the spiritual reality of the local Church. Hence, it was also moulded with the specific intent of eliciting growth in attitudes and practices that require special attention among the People of God in Malta.

The Diocesan Assembly of 2019 was in itself an important step in this ecclesial discernment as those present—representatives of all





sectors in the Archdiocese—prayed, reflected and conversed together on the process, taking their insights to the whole Assembly.

These insights, together with many others that were shared by individuals and groups between November 2019 and February 2020, were collated, reflected upon, and in these past months—especially in light of this experience of COVID-19—distilled as the concrete pastoral initiatives that the Archdiocese commits itself to implement in the coming years.

These commitments are also being presented on the website [journey.church.mt](http://journey.church.mt) to model to all other entities in the Church how the eightfold process of ecclesial reform leads from spiritual renewal to pastoral action. All parishes, schools, religious congregations, lay movements, ministries of service, and every other Catholic entity in Malta are being invited to participate, in their own unique way, in this process of ecclesial discernment towards pastoral reform. Thus, ecclesial renewal will flourish organically, in all sectors of the Church, not because it is imposed from above, but as it unfolds in many aspects.

This process will be truly ecclesial, rebirthing us as *One Church*,

*One Journey* because led by the one Spirit, who is Life and always promises to give us life in abundance. It is only in the Spirit that the Church is purified and that we become true missionary disciples of Christ in our land. The same Spirit emboldens us to remain committed on a journey that demands resilience and creativity that God's Kingdom may be truly manifested in our midst.

The Bishops' decision to offer a "process of ecclesial renewal" to the local Church is also in light of Pope Francis' insistence that the Church must initiate life-giving processes in a spirit of discernment and constant dialogue.

Thus, in light of the new reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Archdiocese is formally initiating this "process for ecclesial renewal," so, even in these dark times, we may continue to write the story of our local Church that began when St Paul, the Apostle himself, was welcomed on our shores. This "process for ecclesial renewal," is both a vision of the Church we hope to be, and the concrete steps for our renewal. Each community is called to ponder and live this process in its own unique way and, as we share the same Spirit, we truly become one Pilgrim People, *One Church*, *One Journey* in Malta.

In the 'Resources and Links' section on **[journey.church.mt](http://journey.church.mt)**, various materials are available that may facilitate the participation of individuals, groups or communities throughout this journey.

The Archdiocese encourages all those who participate in this process of renewal to send a brief report of the fruit of their discernment on **[vjagg.knisja.mt/rapport-ta-progress](http://vjagg.knisja.mt/rapport-ta-progress)** to be uploaded on the website. Through this simple gesture, and as one Church sharing one process of renewal, we may witness to one another how the Holy Spirit is directing this communal journey of healing and service in today's Malta.







# A “Pilgrim People” in Malta

The Church missioned to witness the  
Good News in word, gesture and deed



## The Icon of Emmaus

This past year, inspired by the “Icon of Emmaus,” many bodies of the local Church have reflected upon their hope of deepening the inculturation of the faith in present

This process is thus not a series of tasks, ... but it is an invitation, so that, as disciples, we may once again, sit at the Master’s feet

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day Malta. Led by Bishop Joseph Galea-Curmi, a process of in-depth listening with priests, religious and laity was initiated to deepen the meaning of the word Christ is speaking to the Church in Malta through the Emmaus pericope. As

a local Christian community, whose faith has deep historical roots, not only could we identify with the disciples—man and woman—who left Jerusalem disheartened and afraid to walk to Emmaus; but we could also begin to taste the conversion they experienced when the Risen Christ encountered them on their route and, filled with new zeal, they returned to the flock in the Holy City.

**The eightfold process that was formulated is a description of the essential markers of a synodal journey—a desire and deeply held hope that, just like the disciples of Emmaus, each one of us among the baptised living in Malta becomes aware of our deepest fears, angst, disappointments, suffering ... and rejoices! Together we are invited on a journey where, as pilgrim People, we renew our vocation as missionary disciples on our land.**



Part of this journey may entail coming to terms with our weakness and vulnerability; with our unfaithfulness or pride; with how we failed to be salt, light and leaven in this land, because we thought we could witness the gospel merely by being “Catholic Malta” and propagating attitudes of rigidity. But even if, like the disciples of Emmaus, we have tasted the bitterness of death, like them we are invited to experience the resurrection and to be reborn as Christ’s Church.

Indeed, the disciples of Emmaus encountered the Risen Christ at their darkest hour. Likewise, it is in our own “Maltese” hour of darkness that Christ is inviting us to a renewed discipleship, to a life-giving evangelisation, to service rendered from the heart, and—like Nicodemus who went to meet Jesus in the darkness of night—to a new birth in the Spirit for the Church in Malta.

This is the hope and challenge that our Shepherds presented to us when they chose the Emmaus account as inspiration for our personal and communal discernment as Church: that we appropriate fully our identity and calling as the People of God in Malta, who as sinners are missioned to evangelise this land. In one Spirit, we are encouraged to spread our branches wide, to touch all aspects of life in our land and seas, and thus shelter, beautify and become a sign of new life in present day Malta. This process is thus not a series of tasks, as though the Church were our project, but it is an invitation,

so that, as disciples, we may once again, sit at the Master’s feet and listen to what He desires to teach us. Inspired by Pope Francis’ programmatic Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (November 24, 2013), the **four attitudes** that the local Church is invited to embrace and practise are desperately needed in our country. Only a Church that has a deep understanding of her vocation to be light of the world and her mission to be salt of the earth can fulfil this need. **We are not called to impose our beliefs and opinions onto others or, worse still, to impose ourselves; we are called to be like leaven in dough that transforms the bread into food that sustains our brethren (Maltese or otherwise). A Church that listens, welcomes and accompanies the other (as we take care of one another) is also a Church that opens its doors wide to go forth and spread the Good News.**

Let us allow the  
Holy Spirit to  
guide us along this  
eightfold process of  
renewal as  
one Church along  
one journey!

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## COVID-19: A challenge that we face boldly

At this extraordinary moment in human history, the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also a sign of the times that—together with the universal Church—the local Church is compelled to strip down to the bare essentials of the Gospel and be creative.

The Church, called to become “the body of Christ” through her witness of his salvation, is challenged to lead the world through a process of renewal, where, as we re-evaluate how we have been living as one global community, as one community of nations, in a world mediated by digital technologies, our very experience of being human, of being “embodied spirits,” must be “born of water and spirit” (Jn 3:5). Pope Francis’ teaching in *Laudato si’* (May 24, 2015), for a conversion

to a profound “integral ecological flourishing” in distinction to lifestyles dominated by a “technocratic paradigm,” is more urgent than ever.

It is so ironic that, while we live the unnatural situation of human isolation, out of a profound desire for mutual solidarity and social responsibility to protect our bodies personal and collective, we also seek to be more present to one another, through an extended or mediated presence, that allows us to experience the world as though we have transcended our very flesh.

This new human mode of being, where we experience ourselves as extending beyond our bodies, while still so vulnerable and conditioned by the flesh, is the profound paradox that leads us to rethink who we are



being called to be, as Church, in this new “digital” environment. What so far has been lived—on a global and local scale; through economic and political systems and in ordinary interactions—in an illusory manner, we are called to “humanise” and steward to integral flourishing through our ecclesial witness of the Gospel.

This new challenge is of inculturating the Gospel in a new digitally augmented context that must not forget its rootedness in the particularity of every human story, of every human land, of every “People.”

The prophetic gesture of the Synod of the Amazon reminds us precisely of this: as we enter more decisively in a global digital environment, we cannot forget nor dismiss the uniqueness of every culture bound to its land, to its history, to its worship. Thus far, our temptation has been to follow the “modern” logic that pretends that land, unique stories and even physical bodies matter little or not at all. It has taken a pandemic to reveal glaringly that, not only do they matter, but that we must renew our commitment to honour our bodies, to mutual in-person presence, as we learn to take responsibility for our extended “flesh” through technological mediation.

COVID-19 can be a learning opportunity, waking us up to drink of God’s mercy. As we rediscover the essence of the Good News and allow it to transform us, we can be renewed as Church by discerning fresh ways of becoming true Christians in a new world: in our

worship, in our prophetic speech and teaching, in our daily witness in concrete acts of charity.

Our local Church, our People of God has an important role to play because of the uniqueness and richness of our tradition; because of our extreme resilience and ingenuity. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to guide us along this eightfold process of renewal as one Church along one journey! Our commitments as People of God for the forthcoming years has to consider the new circumstances that will unfold gradually. Thus we are being invited to a process of ecclesial discernment to become attuned to how the Spirit is guiding our people’s flourishing in this particular reality.

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to its land, to its history,  
to its worship.**

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## Waiting eagerly for the Holy Father's visit to our islands

"They showed us unusual kindness" (Acts 28:2). In this context of extreme challenge but, nonetheless, an invitation to spiritual renewal as Church in Malta, it is indeed a blessing that our land hopes to welcome His Holiness, Pope Francis, in the near future.

**The chosen theme**—"They showed us unusual kindness" (Acts 28:2)—**reminds how the Church in Malta was born in that act of "unusual kindness" shown by the People on this land. Acting with "unusual kindness" is the gift and mission of the People of God in Malta to one another and to the universal Church.**

The heart of Pope Francis' theology is an Argentinian appropriation of Vatican II's theology of "the People of God."<sup>1</sup> As presented in *Evangelii gaudium*, 217-237, on various occasions throughout these years of his pontificate, and most recently in the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (February 12, 2020), the "new" teaching that the Pope is inviting us to ponder is that, as "missionary disciples," we are never called or missioned alone. We are

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<sup>1</sup> *Lumen gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 21 November 1964. In its second chapter it presents the Church as "the People of God."



rather called and missioned as “a People”: and not a “People” in an “ideological” sense, but always in a “real” incarnate manner, and therefore as a People who inculturates the Gospel in their unique way.

**An “incarnate” People is a “cultured” or “cultivated” People: with deep roots in a particular land, a strong trunk that reflects its growth in history, and that always branches out in acts of worship or *cultus* that bear much fruit.**

The distinctiveness of this theology of being an inculturated “People of God” is reflected in the signature “cluster of concerns” of this Pontificate:

- the plight of displaced peoples (cut off from their land and history);
- care for our common home;
- the need to tend wounds in the “cultural” fabric, in particular deep-seated conflict;
- the importance of openness to encounter and dialogue;
- emphasis on initiating processes rather than dominating territories;
- attentiveness to the little ones who, in their simplicity, express most eloquently their devotion to God.

Pope Francis’s visit to our islands—fragments of an ancient crossway between lands, right in the middle of a sea of ancient civilisations—gives the opportunity for a new and distinctive articulation of the Pope’s “theology of the People.”

Kindness is a desire  
for friendship  
extended to the  
“other”...

The “Maltese” who for millennia have lived on this land are not necessarily bound by blood, but, like a tree, they are rooted into the land, have matured in history and become uniquely beautiful through their particular expression of *cultus*. Being a “safe haven” in rough seas, a fragile space where civilisations encounter, puts the onus on us as People to “cultivate” our living together: by building a *polis* that can stand the test of time; through adapting to complex social relations justly; through nurturing a shared horizon of meaning.

Most strikingly, initially Pope Francis had chosen to visit our shores on Pentecost Sunday 2020, evoking a desire in the “People of God who gather on this land” to be *another*, “born again” or reborn “from above.”<sup>2</sup> He was encouraging the renewal of our mission “to cultivate” as People on this land by recalling our first encounter with the Gospel: “*Malat*, from which Malta derives its name, meant a safe haven in the culture and language of the ancient

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2 Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna, Homily on Ash Wednesday, 26 February 2020, <https://church.mt/ash-wednesday2020>



seafaring Phoenician People.”<sup>3</sup> As St Luke narrates in the Acts of the Apostles, what characterised the People of Malta was that “they showed us unusual kindness” (Acts 28:2).

Kindness is a desire for friendship extended to the “other”; an arm reaching out to the “stranger” in perilous waters with the promise of fraternity. The Maltese Islands are not “a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:8). **But they are a “safe haven” for true encounter, where peoples from all over the Mediterranean have come together, set roots, exchanged their cultures and knit one story to become “one People” whose defining characteristics are resilience, ingenuity and generosity.**

Thus, it is a trauma to our very being a “Maltese” People when fear, covetousness, violence and division rupture our social fabric, tearing us apart: one (or a group) against the other, seeking to outdo and overcome those whom we make our enemies. It is not diversity that

threatens our unity as “one People.” Rather, for millennia, differences—whether ethnic, cultural, or even religious—have been grafted onto an ever-stronger trunk and have enriched the soil that has sustained our identity as uniquely open and adaptable to new experiences and challenges.

**As today’s secular Malta opens its shores to more migrants; as our small nation becomes increasingly plural and cosmopolitan, we are challenged to recover that original promise of being a “safe haven” and to be renewed as a symbol of unity-in-diversity in a global digital context.**

Malta, the island at the heart of the Mediterranean, can be a model of encounter, dialogue and reconciliation. What we live face-to-face, we can extend to our digital presence.

**This responsibility falls more decisively on the People of God on these islands who, through the same “unusual kindness” shown to the Apostle himself, are called today to be witnesses of Christ’s healing presence by listening, welcoming, accompanying and going forth.**

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3 <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-02/pope-francis-malta-apostolic-visit-sciicluna.html>

## An invitation to a synodal renewal 2020-2024

*One Church, One Journey* invites all the People of God in Malta to a process of ecclesial renewal that grows organically to branch out. Following the same method of the Maltese Diocesan Synod 1999–2003, the process is to be taken as synodal, a “journeying together,” not only across space and time, but by going deeper into the complex reality we are living and, thus, by seeking conversion and purification as “a pilgrim People.” Every step in the process indicates the same number of aspects for our reflection: from the first unequivocal step, to the eighth step depicting eight ways through which we can truly become a Church that discerns; a Church who, like an orchestra, performs harmonious music through diverse instruments since it is directed by the same Holy Spirit of God.

**The Holy Spirit is the power,  
hidden in our hearts, who unites**

**us and emboldens us to tread,  
even in the deepest darkness,  
through all challenges, to heal  
and sustain one another and  
those entrusted to us in our  
land. He lights every step of our  
way; He is the fire that is always  
ablaze; through Him we “wear  
Christ,” becoming his living  
witnesses. Just as our Master  
showed tenderness to all those he  
encountered, so we gaze at those  
who cross our path.**

Thus, inspired by Christ’s encounter with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and while remembering the birth of the Maltese Church by showing “unusual kindness” (Acts 28:2), we will continue to drink from the source of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be renewed as God’s Holy People in this land.

Each of our local communities will continue the journey of communal



discernment **to listen, welcome, accompany and go forth** in concrete ways in our local “field hospital” where Christ desires to meet all suffering men, women and children through “his body and bride,” the Church.

**While studying the eightfold process presented at the 2019 Diocesan Assembly, in the next four years:**

- every home and small community that gathers in Christ’s name,
- every lay movement,
- every religious congregation,
- every ecclesial institution that serves society—especially the many Church schools and institutions of *diakonia*—and
- every parish,

needs to seek to be attuned more faithfully to its particular gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit and **to discern** the call to do greater things in Christ’s name:

- **by listening to his Word** and growing in **contemplation** of the divine expressed in our prayer and communal worship; from this wellspring of Life, we can open our hearts to truly **listen to one another and to the signs of the times;**
- **by welcoming strangers** among us, and thus seeking concrete acts of **healing and reconciliation** especially in service to the most vulnerable;
- **by accompanying one another** to actuate concrete reforms in the **process of lifelong Christian formation and personal and communal integration;**
- by **being sent forth** and thus discerning the specific ways in which we are called to **evangelise** and **witness God’s salvific mercy through concrete acts of service.**





In the context of our witness as Church, we recognise the value of **powerful gestures** that are prophetic signs of truth, justice, healing and reconciliation. Gestures not only move, but expose structures of sin, challenge to deeper reflection and propose discernment for the way forward that conforms most transparently to the Good News. As disciples of Christ, we must also emulate the Master, who

- chose to save through **obedience**: hence we must choose God's will and his glory and flee the temptation to desire our own glory, to serve our own interests, or to instil rivalry and division because of our hardened hearts;
- chose to save by **becoming poor**: hence the importance

of a dignified elegance, of a sense of measure in an otherwise consumerist world, of a beauty that attracts with simplicity without ostentatious display;

- chose to save **by relating with friends**: hence the central importance of relationships, characterised by a disinterested love, each according to their state;
- chose to save by living **in the world**, by touching its wounds and by taking on "the smell of his sheep": hence the call to become one with the complex realities of the world and signs of true hope for our land by being its light, salt and leaven.







A low-angle photograph of a massive, ancient tree. The trunk is thick and gnarled, with a rough, textured bark. Numerous large, spreading branches extend from the trunk, some showing signs of decay or being dead. The background is filled with dense green leaves, creating a lush, forest-like atmosphere. The ground at the base of the tree is covered in dry, brown leaves and pine needles.

# The Eightfold Process



## The eightfold process at a glance

1. At the centre of the Christian life is the encounter with Christ, who calls us to commune with him and sends us forth.
2. This reaches its fullness in the proclamation of the Good News (Evangelisation) through concrete acts of mercy (*Diakonia*).
3. The experience of Christ moulds us into a “Holy People of God” ... who seeks integral flourishing through an active stewardship of the land and all relationships; who is reconciled with our history and lives in the hope of the resurrection; and who celebrates the Paschal Mystery in thanksgiving for all gifts received.
6. We are called to live this witness of the Good News in synergy in all the distinct “spaces” where the Church sows seeds to grow “in time” in present day Malta.
7. Experiences of suffering that shock, traumatise and stultify (see Lk 24:17), are always the *kairos* where Christ seeks to meet every man and woman, to offer his healing and build up his Church. As People of God we are sent to the “field hospital after battle” where suffering is most intense. It is there that wounds can be treated and healed to become marks of Christ’s glorified resurrected body. It is there that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes the hands and feet of Christ.

### **Christ invites all missionary disciples to participate in his salvific mission of healing and renewal.**

4. The Church is called to live the four pastoral attitudes that Christ teaches us in the story of Emmaus:
  - to listen (to the Word);
  - to welcome (“the poor and the stranger”);
  - to accompany (one another); and
  - always to go forth (without fear).
5. To resist the temptation of division and creating ghettos in the Church, it is essential that, as disciples – sinners called by Christ – we remember how we are united in the Holy Spirit to be sent in distinct yet complementary ways.
8. To be missionary disciples implies being attentive to a process of co-creation with the Holy Spirit; this demands ongoing personal and communal discernment as one *ecclesia*.

As a community of disciples being missioned in present day Malta, we embark on a process of ecclesial discernment that reflects Christ’s desires for our:

- contemplation (**a Church that listens**)
- building communion through reconciliation (**a Church that welcomes**)
- formation (**a Church that accompanies**)
- service and mission (**a Church that goes forth**).



8. Discernment prompted by the Spirit

<p><b>Personal</b> Private life Those entrusted in our care In public roles For the good of our common home</p>	<p><b>Communal</b> In the domestic Church Ecclesial institutions Religious congregations and lay movements In the Archdiocese</p>
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7. The wounds of the People

Personal and collective memory	Intimate relationships	Institutional Church	The <i>ecclesia</i>	Our social fabric	The environment	Personal and collective soul
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6. The land where the People of God are sent

Peripheries	The “city”	Public institutions	Ecclesial institutions	Domestic spaces	Digital realm
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5. The People of God missioned today

The ordained	The religious	Lay ministers	Christians in the world	All People of goodwill
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4. The teachings of Christ in the Emmaus story

A Church that listens	A Church that welcomes	A Church that accompanies	A Church that goes forth
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3. One Holy People of God in Malta

Our land	Our history	Our worship and devotions
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2. A Church that proclaims and serves

Evangelisation	<i>Diakonia</i>
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1. Our (re)encounter with Christ

“Their eyes were opened, and they recognised him”
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# Our (re)encounter with Christ

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight (Lk 24:31)

**T**he renewal of the Maltese Church begins with our **renewed encounter with Christ**. The Evangelist Luke constructs the Emmaus pericope as a prototypical narrative of the encounter of Jesus's disciples with the Risen Christ. The disciples, who had followed the Nazarene itinerant preacher, healer and miracle worker—a “prophet” whom they believed to be the Messiah promised to Israel (Lk 24:19, 21)—were devastated, disillusioned and afraid after the shock of his sudden crucifixion. Like Peter himself, who went back to his business after his Teacher's execution



(see Jn 21:1-3), they also left Jerusalem. They seemed oblivious to the women's testimony and to the empty tomb (see Lk 24:22-24). Not only did they hope to pick up the pieces of their lives, but, more likely, to save their own skin. In their belief that the Lord was dead, the community itself was breaking: each fending for themselves; each doing their own thing and going their own way. **Only in Christ could they be one.**

On their journey away from Jerusalem, the Risen Christ seeks them and walks all the way with them. He even explains to them the Scriptures about himself (see Lk 24:27), as he had done many times before.

But they failed to recognise him. Their eyes remained blind; their faith indifferent.

It took one slight gesture of kindness and hospitality towards the

stranger (see Lk 24:29)—one gesture that broke through their self-referentiality—for the Risen Christ to reveal himself to them.

It takes but one seemingly insignificant sign of our willingness to see him, for Christ to open our eyes.

But as “their eyes were opened and they recognised him,” they could only bear to witness his glory for just one fleeting moment. “He disappeared from their sight” (Lk 24:31). The light of his transfigured presence was too much to bear until they would be made perfect by receiving and embodying the Holy Spirit as the *ecclesia*, the “Holy People of God.”

That one moment of encounter with the Risen Christ was enough to transform the disoriented disciples walking to Emmaus into true “missionary disciples” (*Evangelii gaudium* 24, 119-121, 173) and the seed of the *ecclesia*.



- They are emboldened to return to Jerusalem there and then (see Lk 24:33);
- they receive the Holy Spirit from Christ himself who reappears to the group reunited in the Holy City (see Lk 24:36);
- they witness his ascension (see Lk 24:51).

In response, as the remnant of Israel, they worship at the temple in Thanksgiving (see Lk 24:53).

Thus, they anticipate the Last Days that, as Luke recalls from the Prophet Joel, are inaugurated in the descent of the Holy Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17).

The disciples who had followed Jesus, but were lost and afraid at his death, become the first “body of Christ” witnessing the joy of his salvation to the world. They not only proclaim the Good News to the desolate, but, in the power that descends upon them, they heal the sick, raise the lowly, forgive sins and build communities of friends where there are “no longer Jew or Greek, ...

no longer slave or free, ... no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). As Jesus had promised them: “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these... If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it” (Jn 14:12-14).

**The miraculous gifts of the Spirit bestowed on the chosen ones—“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good: to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor 12:7-10)—spread like wildfire as the Church takes root all-over the known world... including on our own islands.**







## A Church that proclaims and serves

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem (Lk 24:32-33a)

**U**nder the loving gaze of the Mother of God, the Church of St Paul continues to proclaim and to serve. The Maltese People have been blessed with receiving the salvific Word from the Apostle himself and of living it in acts of faithful and generous service. Acts 28 testifies to our kind hospitality to Paul and the other captives and soldiers who survived the storm.



**Our ancestors were not only among the first to receive the Gospel: they lived it by offering refuge to the stranger.** And, notwithstanding our turbulent history, we also sought to continue the tradition through the centuries, in particular by tending the sick and healing the wounded who come to our shores, a service epitomised by the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John and Jerusalem

(The Order of Malta). Today, we are challenged to carry on supporting migrants who risk their lives in our waters or who seek a new life in our land. We continue to care for the sick, the poor, those among us who feel broken by life.

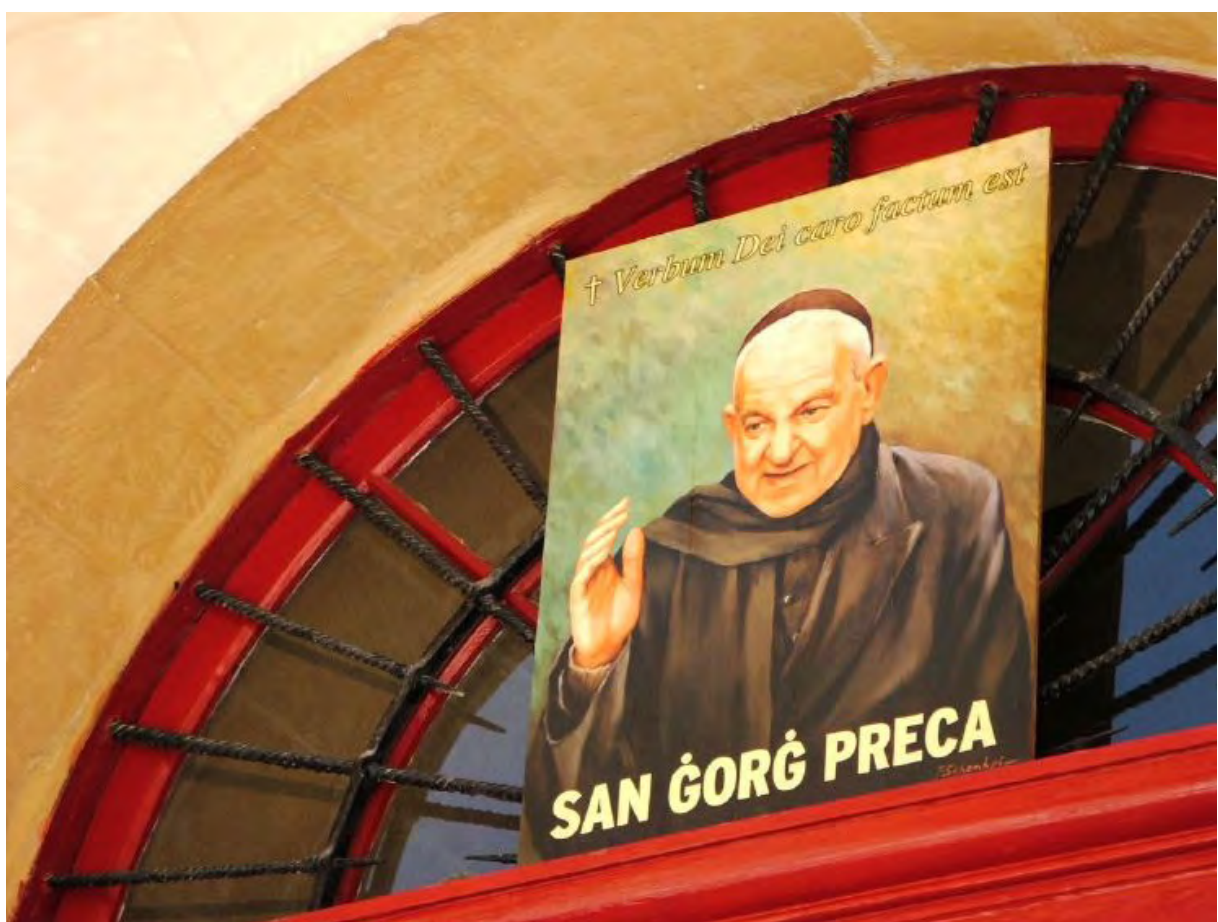
Above all, we are called to place the safeguarding of human life and human dignity at the centre of our proclamation and service.

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## Bearing fruit through Evangelisation and *Diakonia*

In the last century, the wellsprings of Evangelisation and *Diakonia* overflowed as St Ġorġ Preca nurtured a spirituality of catechesis that enriched our parishes and, increasingly, other nations. Likewise, much of the post-Conciliar renewal of the local Church has been nurtured through praying with the

Word in many new lay movements. Monsignor Giuseppe De Piro and others established religious orders of men and women missionaries who seek to serve brothers and sisters wherever the Spirit sends them. Monsignor Mikiel Azzopardi founded *id-Dar tal-Providenza* that continues to serve the most cherished of our



children through the kindness of the Maltese People.

To this very day, the Maltese Church, in collaboration with the Maltese State, continues to support those most in need: whether in homes for the elderly, in caring for the dying, in raising children who originate from difficult backgrounds, in helping those with material needs or problems with addiction, those who suffer domestic abuse, or those who are seeking to build a new life as migrants and refugees.

The Word proclaimed bearing fruit in the concrete acts of mercy of our People, can also be read in our very landscape shaped over the centuries. Religious monuments tell the story of salvation and celebrate the glory of God in stone, art and national treasures. Much of our religious heritage recalls our special prayers to Mary, Mother of God, who interceded for us to experience God's grace in moments of extreme hardship—of illness and death, hunger and poverty, siege and war. Countless times in our long history, when our forebears trusted that only God could sustain them in moments of trial, Word and Mercy, **Evangelisation and *Diakonia* were the two hands that built our Church as, in turn, she raised her arms in thanksgiving and worship.**

Today, Malta may not be experiencing the ravages of extreme famine, plague or strife. Nonetheless, our people's soul seems weary because of indifference; perplexed by rapid cultural change; exhausted through the pace of our new

Our psychological wounds seem as perilous as the physical wounds of the “field hospital after battle.”

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lifestyles; burdened by silent suffering. Our psychological wounds seem as perilous as the physical wounds of the “field hospital after battle.” It is just as critical that they are urgently sutured and nursed.

**As the local Christian community yearns to taste again the transformative power of the encounter with Christ, and as it seeks to nurture its weary spirit through his Word and to be reformed through imitating his self-emptying love, we must not only read the signs of the times, but remember who we were called to be as the one Holy People of God on this island.**

**Only thus can the Church be missioned anew in today's socio-political reality.**







3

## One Holy People of God in Malta

“We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21)

**O**ur land, our history, our expression of faith are the roots of the One Holy People of God in Malta. The Christian life is cruciform. In daily life, we journey **horizontally**, moving from our homes to workplaces, from our schools to leisure places, from our churches to the peripheries, and increasingly also in digital spaces. We journey ahead while constantly aware that our story of faith, passed on to us by our ancestors, opens us up **vertically** to the hope of the *parousia*. “Time is greater than space” (*Evangelii gaudium* 222-225) because time bridges every moment of our God-willed created existence to the *eschaton*. But that existence is ordered to community as God is Communion; that “life” given



finds its fulfilment in ecclesiality, where we are transformed to a Holy People of God bound in the love of the Holy Spirit and the joy of the original *kerygma*. The universality of the Church rests upon the manifold unique expressions of being “God’s Holy People” in diverse cultures.

Catholicity is the testimony of each of humanity’s distinct “Peoples”, who together embody the dazzling beauty of God’s salvation and divinisation promised on all flesh.

“As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains, and after it had been brought together became one, so may your Church

be gathered together from the ends of the earth unto Your Kingdom” (*Didache* 9.4).

The uniqueness of every People is expressed in **its particular culture**. In being the “whole greater than the sum of parts” (*Evangelii gaudium* 234-237) that reflects a people’s ethos or soul, culture is also the rich soil in which the people’s distinctive witness of the Good News grows to bear fruit.

**Three aspects build a “People” to become a true *ecclesia*, a unique “Holy People of God”: land, history, their expression of faith.**

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## Integral flourishing on our land

In his encyclical *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis calls for an “ecological conversion,” where just relations among all members of society—indeed, how they come together to build a “civilisation of love”—also assume a devoted stewardship of the earth and the natural environment. **Greed plunders**

**not merely the possessions of others, but ultimately the earth itself. It destroys economic, social and political relations. Finally, it destroys the People themselves** who become disconnected from the “mother”—the land, the sea, the air—that gives them life.



Being attuned to how all is interconnected—to how the unique identity of a People flourishes through the particular physical, social, cultural reality that they are gestated into—allows them to be truly sensitive to how God

encounters his People in their particular reality. As Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, God encourages their personal ongoing conversion, to become a People who build a nation that contributes to the healing of the whole ecology.

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## Our history



A People's history is shaped through generations who pass on not only their accumulated wisdom and accomplishments, but also their brokenness, unresolved traumas and dreams cut short. Every generation must aim not only to birth and nurture its children, but also to undo the mistakes of the past, to finish what their forebears left undone, and to fulfil their hopes and aspirations. History shapes us not only in our bodies—we carry the genes of those who came before us. It also recreates our collective soul, as we carry the remnants of stories

that shaped past lives and we are entrusted with passing them on to future generations.

History is, after all, about the realm of the dead still palpable among the living. In our Christian tradition, it is about the souls for whose purgation we pray that they may see God face to face; it is about the saints whom we venerate and whose intercession we humbly ask for. Above all, it is about the “communion of saints” who truly worships together not only across space, but throughout time and for eternity.

But being anchored in our history does not imply being nostalgic for the past; it is about embracing these narratives, consuming their pathos, and learning their often harsh moral lessons, so as to live together responsibly in the present. Dismissing the past, on the other hand, or pretending it never happened, is enslaving, because what fails to be appropriated will exert its influence deterministically,

robbing a People of its freedom. This dynamic is most evident in divisions and strife that perpetuate mutual (blind) scapegoating, hurling stones at each other and cycles of violence and brokenness.

**Breaking such cycles is not about dismissing differences, but about working through them through dialogue, healing and reconciliation.**

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## Our worship and devotions

A particular People of God is recognised through the way they worship. Popular devotions, as an expression of the People's spontaneous prayer chiselled in memory because inspired by their lived realities, reveal the most intimate aspect of their relationship with God. Prayer that emerges spontaneously and naturally from a culture is a rich

expression of how God encounters the People, at *kairos* moments of their ecclesial journey, deepening their faith. Whether praise or lament, petition or thanksgiving, popular expressions of the faith echoing the story of salvation can reflect the community's most authentic becoming as Church: God's chosen Holy People.

**The Church betrays herself by reducing prayer and liturgy to mere ritual; by the factions' drive to one-upmanship; or by replacing devotion with hedonism.**

But when disconnected from the lived memory of the whole Church in Scripture and Tradition—that is, when popular local expressions become mere “traditions” that perpetuate *pika* (rivalry) or serve the market economy rather than God—the People's prayer is not only impoverished, but the “body” itself becomes fragmented. Then, the Church betrays herself: by reducing prayer and liturgy to mere ritual; by the factions' drive to one-upmanship; or by replacing devotion with hedonism. Reconnecting with our spiritual roots—with our ancestors' memory of being “one Holy People of God”—becomes essential.



Our ecclesial roots of **land, history and prayer** remind us that:

- like Mary, we must turn our gaze to the Father as we are emboldened to be grateful and, without ceasing, **contemplate** the mercy he has shown us, his People;
- we must seek **reconciliation**—by stitching ruptures with our past, with each other, with the rest of creation, and ultimately with God;
- we must invest in the **formation** of every disciple called to be Christ-like to serve as his “body” and to be stewards of culture;
- only thus can we be **missioned** as body of Christ in our land.









## The teachings of Christ in the Emmaus story

Jesus himself came near and went with them  
(Lk 24:15)

Then beginning with Moses and all the  
prophets, he interpreted to them the things  
about himself in all the scriptures (Lk 24:27)

**C**hrist the Teacher models pastoral attitudes to his disciples. Like other Peoples, our land, history, worship and mission are always threatened by the dangers of greed, division and pride. Through the gift of Christ's healing and redemption, we must take stock of the new threats to our cultural fabric and seek to (re)build one home and story, marked by the desire for transcendence.

By keeping her gaze fixed upon **Christ, the True Teacher**, the Church learns the attitudes through which our culture becomes more authentic and human.

**Four pastoral attitudes from the narrative of Emmaus challenge us to learn how to be a People of contemplation, reconciliation, formation and mission in these times.**

## A Church that listens



Pope Francis stresses the importance of a Church that listens. First and foremost, “we need to be constantly trained in hearing the Word” (*Evangelii gaudium* 174) in order to become God’s Holy Assembly.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all People. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not

know him. He came to what was his own, and his own People did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.”  
(Jn 1:1-5, 10-14, 16-18)



“Listening” is how we become attuned to God who speaks to us, his People, in salvation history. First, he spoke “through the prophets,” chosen and anointed to be his messengers; but in the end times, he sent his only Son, the Word made flesh, to dwell among us. His Spirit of Truth, who remains in the world, continues to witness to Christ and to comfort his Church.

In the Scriptures, we listen to God’s words echoing in the history of the world and in the hearts of all those who desire to “become of God”; to “come to know him” as He has made us first. Without pondering the Word of God in the Scriptures; without being formed to be Christlike by seeking to encounter him in the concrete stories of the Gospel, our ears remain deaf, our eyes remain closed, our hearts hardened, to the grace that God desires to pour upon us. Without the living Word of God, we shrivel and die.

But “their hearts were burning inside” as the Risen Lord broke open the Scriptures to the disciples of Emmaus. The Scriptures soften our hardness of heart, opening us up to the Other and to all others whom God has loved from the beginning.

In the encounter with the Word, our hearts expand and overflow. Creating space for the other to be “other” in our lives is about “taking in” and walking in their own shoes, as the Risen Lord walked with his disheartened disciples. The Christian, by virtue of being the disciple of the Word-made-flesh, is formed to be truly attentive to the other and, therefore, “to listen” to them.

“We need to practise the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders” (*Evangelii gaudium* 171).

Listening is an attitude where one puts their whole self at the disposal of the other; where all one’s energy and attentiveness are given to the other. Listening is opening up the space within oneself where others are truly safe, knowing that they are seen and accepted for who they are, and, therefore, feel cherished.

A Church that listens is a united People because they have created a shared space to know one another: “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father” (Jn 10:14b-15a). But **the Church who listens across divisions**—especially with those who might see themselves outside the sheepfold—also practices what Christ demanded of his friends: “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (Jn 10:16).

Building bridges through dialogue reconstitutes an *ecclesia* measured not by badges of belonging, but by the desire for a shared spirit of friendship and collaboration. **The fruit of an ecclesial listening is to grow in our common prayer, that invites us to deeper contemplation and discernment.**

## A Church that welcomes

In the Emmaus narrative, Christ “opened the eyes” of the disciples when they were ready to “break out” of their cocoon of sorrow and see the “other.” The attitude of “welcoming” is about turning one’s gaze out of oneself—even if the very recognition of “otherness” may lead one to appreciate how much “they” are like oneself. The moment we risk breaking open our enclave and walk out the door to relationship, we also discover our true self. **The fruit of an ecclesial welcoming attitude is true reconciliation.**

Pope Francis writes, “The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and

encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (*Evangelii gaudium* 114).

A People willing to welcome others grows to be more confident of their unique gifts—and, paradoxically, in and through the very acts of sharing them. Through concrete gestures of welcome that reveal our desire to extend friendship to the religious other, to the non-Maltese other, or even to the brother or sister that past hurts, *pika* (rivalry), or merely different outlooks and opinions have taught us to mistrust, **the Maltese Church becomes “bread that is broken” to rediscover her original calling in Acts 28:** of sharing the Good News by serving everyone without discrimination.



## A Church that accompanies



Becoming one “Maltese” People through our differences is a continual process of mutual growth that always implies suffering. Nature always craves equilibrium—even when that equilibrium perpetuates systemic evil and dysfunctional structures that control cycles of violence rather than resolving them.

**Healing long-term prejudice—where “structures of sin” become stable “structures of blessing”—demands going through difficult periods of purgation.**

Accompaniment is about this willingness to suffer together for the betterment of another. It is about forcing the storm without which there can be no promise of lasting peace.

A Church that accompanies re-enacts the sacrifice of the cross, where the innocent victim broke through the impasse of death by allowing darkness to fall on earth. For it was by descending to the deepest darkness that the Son of man would free Adam and all humankind from Hades. As Jesus himself says, “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptised, and what stress I am under until it is completed!” (Lk 12:49-50)

Accompaniment is the courage to walk with another through the perilous but necessary path of death and rebirth. In the early Church, it was lived in the adult



catechumenate, where the catechist, sustained by the whole community, personally imitated Christ the Pedagogue, by accompanying the catechumen's passage of dying to oneself to rise with Christ at baptism. It was also lived in repeated communal gestures of penance and purgation that marked the Church's desire for ongoing purification.

"The Church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious and laity—into this 'art of accompaniment' that teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (see Ex 3:5). The pace of the accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate

gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life" (*Evangelii gaudium* 169). This is what the Church is called to offer People, with sensitivity and full respect. "Without detracting from the evangelical ideal, we need to accompany with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth as these progressively occur" (*Evangelii gaudium* 44).

This journey from the cross to the resurrection, from death to rebirth, from old life to new life, continues to characterise the Christian life in its praxes for lifelong formation and in the sacraments, in particular the "source and summit" of the Christian life, the Eucharist.

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## A Church that goes forth

Until the last days, the Church's mission of preaching the Good News of salvation and of actuating it through the willingness to welcome, listen and accompany, remains ongoing. As Pope Francis

exhorts: "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (*Evangelii gaudium* 27).

**The Maltese Church is sent forth among the unseen, the "disposables" of a technocratic economy and human vainglory.**

It also takes missionary disciples to the ends of the earth (Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8): for it is in the forgotten peripheries, in the most unseen places of suffering, that Christ chooses to encounter first. The Church's "option for the poor" echoes Jesus' own ministry: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mk 2:17). Thus, as

Pope Francis insists, it is from the peripheries that the Church is enriched and strengthened. The poor are the Church's blood because theirs is the deepest faith.

The People of God in Malta must seek and reach out to the new peripheries in our context. It is this attitude of going forth that helps the Church venture in the peripheries or in new socio-cultural environments, to seek those who are distant, and to be ever-ready "to abandon the complacent attitude

that says: 'We have always done it this way'" (*Evangelii gaudium* 33).

Perhaps our peripheries are literally encroaching on our shores, as they have throughout our history. Or perhaps they are emerging right in our midst, in our very neighbours, but through our busyness, our mad pursuit of riches, status or latest lifestyle fads, we no longer quite see them. The Maltese Church is sent forth among the unseen, the "disposables" of a technocratic economy and human vainglory.









# The People of God missioned today

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together (Lk 24:33)

**A**s the People of God who gathers in present day Malta to **go forth** and **proclaim the Good News** through gestures of **welcome, listening and accompaniment** that bring **reconciliation**, seek **formation** and invite to **contemplation**, we become **one body of Christ** who, under the leadership of the one Head, the Archbishop, are empowered to serve according to our particular gifts. Our one People brings together **five key charisms**, each according to the distinct roles played by its members.



## The priesthood of the ordained that mediates between God and his People

The Church is herself the sacrament of God's presence in the world. In her sacramental life she manifests most fully different aspects of God's love for his People, and how God's Holy People, as his Bride, seeks to return the same love of the Father poured upon her. That divine love lavishly poured out is revealed in fullness in the God-Man, the Christ, who not only saves, but is the Icon of the Father made flesh. Jesus the Christ, both Lamb and High Priest, remains with his Church until the end of times and his living presence, continues to be made visible in the priesthood of his People, and indeed, sacramentally, in the priesthood of the ordained.

The sacramental priesthood of the ordained is crucial to the Church since, tangible signs of God's presence among us are bestowed upon the world in the sacraments.

Most centrally, the Church celebrates the Eucharist as the "source and summit" of the Christian life since, it not only brings the People of God together, it makes them "one" as God is Trinitarian *koinonia*. Together with the other sacraments of initiation, it builds the People of God as the one "body," just as the sacraments of healing strengthen the Church that always depends on God's mercy, in both body and soul. Marriage and Holy Orders, on the other hand, bridge today's Church with tomorrow's, not only by being a lifelong promise of fruitful love and selfless service, but also by being a symbol of the People's ongoing faithfulness.

Nevertheless, the sacraments are not the only way how the Church reveals God's love and gathers to worship: all our witness of the Good News, all our prayer, the lifeblood



of the Church, is communal in Christ, insofar as we are truly open to the one Spirit who builds us up to become one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

The priestly presence in the Church's authentic expression of faith, in particular in her life of prayer, reminds of the complementarity between Christ and his Bride, between the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the whole world. Thus, this presence seeks to recover and to purify the Church's style of leadership, the language of its teachings, and our People's devotions as they emerged at different points in our history. It seeks to nurture new expressions of

being Church-in-the-world through the presence, words and prayer as they arise in People's hearts today. It harmonises all expressions of reflection, prophecy and worship, as multiple voices become one choir and multiple instruments become one orchestra, praising God.

This does not mean that diversity becomes an end in itself, nor that traditions should satisfy our nostalgia; pruning is as necessary as watering and manuring the soil, if the tree is to bear good fruit. And leading the Church's prayer life also implies standing for what truly nurtures the People's devotion and not merely doing what is popular, appealing or scores points.

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## **The prophetic charisms of male and female religious, who, by consecrating their lives to Christ, witness to the hope of the *eschaton***

The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in a lifestyle dedicated to prayer and service, symbolise with clarity how the Church ought to prefigure the Kingdom. Every consecrated person is like the flame of a candle that burns with courage and persistence in pitch darkness. For the People of God, who are called to live their life in the world, they are living witnesses that their true home is "in heaven".

In turn, each religious congregation manifests a particular charism that the local *ecclesia* has not only inherited, but also needs to cultivate in the present times. Our local Church is blessed with many male and female religious orders.

The way the religious live these different charisms in faithfulness and with transparency manifests

**Each religious congregation manifests a particular charism that the local *ecclesia* has not only inherited, but also needs to cultivate in the present times.**



to the whole People of God which crucial aspects of the local Church's ministry they should be nurturing: contemplation, teaching, healing, spiritual discernment, serving the lowliest, spiritual accompaniment, educating our children.

The perseverance of living the same charisms with authenticity and creative adaptation over centuries, and therefore under shifting cultural challenges, also models to the Church of today how to inculturate the Gospel anew in Malta.

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## The variety of lay ministries in the Church

Becoming a Holy People of God who is missioned rests on two complementary centripetal and centrifugal movements. Both are primarily the vocation of the laity.

First is the daily, but hidden, ministry of the many Christian parents called to nurture the “domestic Church” over which they preside. This ministry is indispensable and yet, the most fragile especially in our challenging times. The whole ecclesial community must offer mutual support and accompaniment to parents as they raise their children in the faith. The Church is made up of families, and motherhood and fatherhood are the most foundational ways in which we imitate in love, in the divine *caritas* that is mercy, the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God and the Church.

This foundational ministry of formation is also extended and sustained by those who help Christian parents most closely:

- the key ministry of catechists in parishes, and of teachers and other professionals especially in Catholic schools, whose primary purpose is to nurture a Christian ethos in our children;
- youth ministers and family ministers, spiritual directors,



pastoral counsellors and others who serve by accompanying families in various phases of their lifelong formation.

It is essential that ministries are strengthened, since youths are the hope of the Church; the guardians of her Tradition, yet bold enough to adapt with great flexibility to the inculturation of the Gospel in our times. While remaining faithful to the apostolic *kerygma*, the Church is reborn with every generation,

especially in youths' relationship with their grandparents.

The mission of lay ministers is also vibrant in the Church through their participation, by virtue of their baptism, in Christ's priesthood. Many men and women, often in hiddenness, serve in their parish life through various liturgical and prayer ministries, often through the particular charism of their lay movement. **Lay movements are a wellspring of life in the Church offering rich diversity that spreads to many homes and peripheries,**

**recalling the original desire of Christians who came together to break the Word and become friends in the Lord.**

The laity also serve in works of charity: through parish social ministries offered to the community at large as well as in their professional services in Church institutions.

Ultimately, the service of the laity must remain oriented to the Church's primary mission of witness in the world.

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## On being Christians in the world

Christians do not separate themselves from the world through clothing or markings because their home and mission is the world itself which they are called to sanctify. Thus, what distinguishes the Christian in the world is always the sign of the Good News, the joy expressed as the mark of the Kingdom: God's everlasting mercy towards the world. As Karl Rahner SJ put it, Christians in the world are "mystics" through everything they do; they infuse all their action with God's mercy wherever they are.

Their calling to renew the world must be lived with temperance, by denying the urge for personal success or vainglory.

Christians are professionals, artisans, labourers, homemakers and pensioners, and in their spheres of life, they are called to work not just with passion, creativity and integrity, but also in solidarity, always oriented to the wellbeing of others and the common good. They should actively organise the grassroots and participate in civil society, not only out of a sense of justice, but ultimately, of hope, trust and love.

**The Christian vocation  
in the world  
reaches its pinnacle  
in their willingness to serve  
the whole "city"  
in the art of politics.**

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It must be lived with courage, by being resilient in the face of adversity of all kinds, but also by pursuing the less popular path that chooses the wellbeing of the most forgotten over the comfort of the crowds.

The Christian vocation in the world reaches its pinnacle in the willingness to serve the whole “city” in the art of politics. At all levels of political participation, the Christian

must reach out to dialogue, seek creative solutions to conflict that benefit all, and decide prudently with a vision for the greater good.

The inculturation of the Gospel in the Maltese context of today is ultimately not about how many are baptised or call themselves Catholics, but about how we together, as People living on this land, embody the hope of the Kingdom at all levels of our society.

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## All People of goodwill seeking the Truth

The Church is not just a community of the holy: it is also sinners who fail in their discipleship, but who, nonetheless, persist in trying. It is also those who struggle and therefore question what is truly “the good life”: insofar as they remain faithful and committed to the search for Truth, they are also seeking to have their eyes opened by Christ.

The early Church recognised these paths of seeking the Truth and of returning to the fold as

the Catechumenate and the Order of Penitents. New forms of these paths are being retrieved in today’s Malta: *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is growing slowly but steadily. Just as pivotal is the accompaniment of those who, for various reasons—some because of personal hurts suffered; others because of disillusionment with the institution; still others because, at some point in their life, their faith was tested or became lukewarm—identify as “lapsed Catholics.”

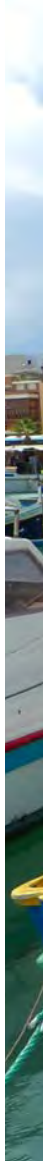


Often these members, who sometimes out of personal conviction push the “boundary” of being Church, are our family members, our friends, our colleagues. The very relationships that bind us to them testify that the Holy Spirit remains at work: not only so those pushing the boundaries may return to “the centre” through formal ecclesial practices; but also for those who consider themselves as being “in the centre” to question the authenticity of their witness, and their willingness to be challenged to truly be purified in their discipleship. In the words of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, the second century bishop who not only developed the understanding of the faith but also shepherded a Church of martyrs:

“For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and **where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace**; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother’s breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ” (*Adversus Haereses* III.24.1).

It is not necessarily the closeness to visible ecclesiastical structures that marks the authenticity of our ecclesial witness, but the transformation of hearts by the Spirit who works in mysterious ways.







## The land where the People of God are sent

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:35)

**B**ecoming the Holy People of God bonded in the power of the one Comforter (*Parakletos*) and Teacher assumes being attentive to where the Holy Spirit desires to birth and sustain the “body of Christ” in our midst.

There are **six distinct spaces** in present day Maltese society where the Church must discern which best practices constitute the witness of Christ’s contemplation, reconciliation and formation through concrete gestures of listening, welcoming and accompaniment.





## Peripheries where the vulnerable dwell

The privileged space where Christ desires to encounter his chosen ones to offer them new life is precisely in their vulnerability, in the midst of their suffering. Thus, first and foremost, the disciples' mission of witness must be "in the field hospital after battle" because it is there that men and women yearn for the God who saves.

But in a land where we often claim to know everything about one another, the "peripheries" and the suffering may not always be immediately apparent. The poor are always among us and today we have our fair share: migrants who have been traumatised through perilous journeys; the homeless and those living in less than dignified conditions; those struggling with addictions or other debilitating physical and mental health conditions; the elderly and single parent households unable to make ends meet; children and youths who

feel disheartened for the future.

Even so, stereotypes of "the poor" might not always suffice, for suffering may also be hidden where one least expects it. We may become "blind" or "indifferent" in particular to familiar sights: the elderly burdened with loneliness; those grieving the loss of a loved one; the child suffering emotional neglect; the neighbour struggling with abuse at work; the family caught in marital conflict; the new mother with no support; the victim of domestic violence; the colleague gripped with anxiety; the friend caring for an ill family member.

The primary responsibility of the Church is to be the "eyes that see" and "ears that hear" the cries emerging from the peripheries. It is there that we can be attentive and responsive to all the wounded among us—no matter how hidden their suffering may be.

## **Spaces of leisurely encounter and business enterprise where People imagine and seek to create their future**

There can be no society without spaces where People come together to rest from their daily chores; dialogue about common concerns; exchange ideas; nurture a creative, entrepreneurial spirit; collaborate on joint initiatives; and build a better future together. A healthy society flourishes when everyone—including youth and children, and across generations—dreams together, shares stories and weaves a common identity through their creative spirit. **It is in these spaces of encounter that the Spirit sows the seeds that will bear tomorrow's fruit.**

Through all her members, the Church must participate in public debate to collaborate with all People of goodwill; she bears the responsibility **of being a space of encounter and dialogue where everyone, with no exception, is**

**invited to actively participate in the political and economic task of building a culture of integral ecological flourishing.**

Through her rich tradition of reflection on human wellbeing, and of engaging with the arts and all natural and human sciences, the local Church has the duty to **cultivate a culture of encounter in the Maltese context that is becoming increasingly ethnically and religiously diverse.**

This is especially true for our youths, who have a natural disposition to explore, to think outside the box, to try new things, to reach out to others and, thus, like a wild bush, to spread their branches rapidly to build bridges and connections. Our youths are not only a sign of new life, but they are also essential building blocks in the future of society.







## Public institutions that regulate our life together

Public institutions like government, parliament, the law courts, law enforcement, civil society, national security, healthcare and schools shape our life together and are responsible for safeguarding our future as a nation. Public institutions must not only promote justice: they must be seen as being just and in service of the common good. They must empower the

vulnerable and give a voice to the disenfranchised, so we can create and preserve a shared narrative of what makes us one People seeking to build a life in common on a small land that is part of the European Union and the greater commonwealth of nations.

Public institutions must not only promote justice: they must be seen as being just and in service of the common good.

The sustainable growth of our nation depends on our ability to collaborate together and with other peoples for the long haul, rather than be driven by short-sighted and egotistical wants. **All our institutions must educate for civic responsibility rather than instant gratification; to nurture an ethos of cooperation rather than competition; to seek an ecological conversion that considers the holistic and mutually dependent effects of our actions, rather than thinking narrow-mindedly by focusing solely on what is of immediate concern.**



## Ecclesial spaces, in particular parishes, lay movements and religious institutions

Nowhere is this process of educating more necessary than in our ecclesial spaces that must nurture a truly “Christian ethos” and therefore form our “Catholic” presence in society to be the “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” (Mt 5:13,14). If, as the People of God, we fail in our foundational mission to be reconciled and therefore witness the lifestyle of “the Kingdom” rather than of “the world”; if our “salt has lost its taste,” then “it is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot” (Mt 5:13).

The Church, present in society through its manifold institutions, remains “relevant” insofar as her “public” institutional witness also conforms to the strict demands of the Gospel—not as a statement of rigid legalism, but as a true

manifestation of justice that practises a “preferential option for the poor” and of mercy that dares to go the extra mile in being welcoming, generous and kind to the stranger and those most in need.

Through her institutions, the Church also has the responsibility **to form a society that seeks an objective common good**—not by forcing a vision of the good life upon others, but through the persuasive power of the “joy of the Gospel” itself. That experience of joy emerges most eloquently in **the public expression of faith** that, while reminding of the “Catholic” roots of our Maltese culture, excludes no one, but rather invites to a deeper shared human experience.



## Domestic spaces

Our identity is revealed most clearly in our most intimate relationships. Our homes serve as the most foundational school to become persons-in-relationship who grow in mutual trust, collaborate towards common goals, resolve inevitable conflicts, and, most crucially, forgive mutually inflicted hurts and disappointments. Domestic spaces dissolve if their members do not practice reconciliation as part of that process of nurturing the next generation. Moreover, **forgiveness—that is essential to personal and communal healing—is only truly possible as grace from God. Thus, our domestic spaces are the true barometers that measure the resilience of our nation and, indeed, the authenticity of our witness as People of God who reconciles, forms and participates in God’s saving mercy.**

The sacramental nature of the marriage that bonds two disciples, and on which the domestic Church is built, can inoculate against the many pressures that challenge family life and personal relationships in today’s Malta. But marriage must also be lived authentically, and to succeed, it needs much support from all the Church and its structures. **Christian families are ultimately the very skeleton of the *ecclesia*, whose strength sustains the whole body.** The crises of love in family life are not only experiences that could break us, but what can form us to become a purified People of God, truly capable of loving “in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health” and for the long haul towards the *parousia*.





## Augmented digital realm

Each one of the offline spaces outlined above is also extended online through the network of mediated human participation that is the internet. It is the “new world” expanding from the world we were familiar with. This is a web-like reality, of “ubiquitous connectivity and pervasive proximity,” where the patterns of social relations we were used to—hierarchy, authority, bureaucracy—give way to new modes of interaction; new ways of collaboration; new expressions of being human. This new environment—our own selves seamlessly intertwined with one another and our creations—reaches to the ends of the world and therefore urges us to reconsider even our own “Maltese” particularity.

“The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development

and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age” (*Evangelii gaudium* 224 quoting Romano Guardini).

This new mediated reality we are immersed into is an invitation to humanise the capabilities of this “networked” and “artificially intelligent” culture. As such, it is also an opportunity to (re)discover essentially human characteristics that can and must flourish in a new way.

Since in today’s connected world no one can be a stranger, we are certainly being invited to live experiences of authentic encounter, in openness to dialogue, and to together weave a more universal language of human solidarity and friendship.



In this global  
“humanising” task,  
the Church has a duty  
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flourishing.

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Indeed, as time passes, the social spaces where People come together to converse, exchange insights, ideas and dream of a better tomorrow are increasingly “augmented spaces” where the digital realm extends our social, economic and political lives. Where we actually spend our time, where we gather for gossip, jokes, “news”, advice, play, togetherness ... has become the space where we are simply invited “to be community.”

This should not imply a denial of the richness of our immediate embodiment. But we are being invited to wonder at the emergent beauty of our extended minds, and indeed even extended “bodies.” Through screens of all sizes we can learn to reach out to one another and be the “communion of souls” we all humanly hope and yearn for.

This “reaching out” is not the same as smiling to one another, looking into each other’s eyes, or shaking hands. Likewise, gathering together as “a community that prays” is reconceived “in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities

of that age.”

But what we are discovering is a “new language” of shared memories, exchanged thoughts, fragments of feelings, experiences of being moved by beauty... that inspire us, make us our “selves”, persons who seek companionship. It is a language where what is in our minds and souls flows as evocative symbols, as veiled sensations, that together we seek to stitch as one narrative to make sense of our collective “new world.”

Nevertheless, putting on the extended skin of our digital selves also poses new challenges: the “dominant technocratic paradigm” (see *Laudato Si`* 106-110) follows the logic of utility, reducing persons to data, and therefore to opportunities for manipulation and gain. Thus, social media driven by the logic of maximizing profit and of selling (or pushing) “information” to the highest bidder, are also becoming the means to dictate ideologies, relativised values, populist agendas, and therefore to limit the people’s freedom.

It is thus urgent to imagine a shared “global” life by cultivating the art of openness and dialogue across all differences of culture, religion and philosophical opinion. Social media pose a greater risk where the careful manipulation of our likes and dislikes, of opinions and preferences, shapes the people’s vision of ourselves more than reasoned persuasion. Because close immediate encounters tend to be emotionally laden, our new proximity gives rise to a new collective agonism and tribalism. Moreover, by means of algorithms and targeted propaganda, we can easily be manipulated emotionally

to favour agendas that contradict reason and the common good. “Communication” in mediated spaces is thus, first and foremost, about breaking the shackles that aim to “sell” particular lifestyles, where the privileged increase their gain at the expense of reducing the masses to mere “numbers” mined for data.

In this global “humanising” task, the Church has a duty to speak prophetically by insisting on

the fundamental truths that are necessary for human flourishing. Moreover, the universal Church must also speak the language—and gifts—of each People so that no one is excluded, and every culture is included. **This implies the inculturation of the Gospel in each particular reality, so that together, in our mutual exchange in this new digital environment, we may genuinely share the gifts that enrich the “communion of Peoples.”**







## The wounds of the People

“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:25-26)

**G**od’s love for all men and women knows no boundaries. The Father sends his only Son that all may receive salvation, that all may become the “Holy People of God.” As the Father through his Son sends the Comforter (see Jn 14:16-17), all are invited to taste the joy of being reborn from above (see Jn 3:3) and of being filled with the power to actively participate in stewarding

a new political order and New Creation.

As we read in the First Epistle to Timothy: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. **This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time” (1 Tim 2:1-6).

In her missionary zeal, the whole Church as a community of disciples begins by being attentive to the signs of the times and, more specifically, **to “signs” of woundedness where Christ desires to offer his healing.**

“Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human

misfortune and instead enter into the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and we experience intensely what it is to be a People, to be part of a people” (*Evangelii gaudium* 270).

Indeed, we acknowledge that our fragility as a People—personal, communal and ecological—is like that of shattered “earthen vessels.” We are broken and barely holding together as “one.” But the holy balm entrusted to the Church—the melted gold of God’s mercy that mends the deepest fractures—demands that we **go forth**, “allowing Christ to burst out of our doors,” to become agents of healing. In the hands of the Spirit and through the Church’s gestures of **listening, welcoming and accompaniment, what could be thrown into fire as mere pieces of broken clay, becomes a rebirth to new life:** the “Holy People of God” that grows in reconciliation, formation and prayer... to be sent forth.

Left unattended our suffering deepens and alienates us even more from God’s desire to pour his love upon us. Thus, the Church has the duty to act decisively to care for the most wounded. The more abrasive and disjointed the broken pieces of our fractured hearts and relationships, the more the Church is called to serve selflessly and patiently, so that God’s love is experienced as gold that heals and gives new, and ever more beautiful, life.

**Seven kinds of wounds** must be carefully tended through the Church’s mission of Evangelisation and *Diakonia*.

“God our Saviour,  
who desires everyone  
to be saved and to come  
to the knowledge  
of the truth”  
(1 Tim 2:4).



## Wounds in our personal and collective memory

None of us are immune to **memories** of violence suffered and inflicted; of hurts too deep to come to terms with or accept; of distress that cannot be quite acknowledged or expressed in words. These deep wounds, often first experienced in childhood, leave us vulnerable but also bitter; they bruise our hearts but also make us resentful. Unless one comes to a peaceful resolution with one's suffering, the effects of unresolved trauma can become contagious, passed on in families and tightly knit communities whose memories become distorted through unresolved grief.

Christ desires to liberate us, first and foremost, from these deep-seated scars that hold us captive to harrowing memories. The Church's primary mission of hope is this

exorcising of the past to heal the deep woundedness of the heart that harms individuals and communities alike.

As Saint John Paul II taught the Church and the world: "The truth is that one cannot remain a prisoner of the past, for individuals and peoples need a sort of "healing of memories," so that past evils will not come back again. This does not mean forgetting past events; it means re-examining them with a new attitude and learning precisely from the experience of suffering that only love can build up, whereas hatred produces devastation and ruin. The deadly cycle of revenge must be replaced by the new-found liberty of forgiveness" (Message for the 30<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace, January 1, 1997).







## Wounds in our intimate relationships

No man or woman is an island and our very humanity implies the desire to be persons-in-relationship. As we seek to encounter one another, we do so through our deepest self: the stories that we knit to make sense of our lives, and the stories we share to make sense of where we are coming from and who we desire to become. Intimate relationships, especially with spouses and friends, with our children and siblings, shape us as persons, families and small communities. Through sharing our lives together, we care for one another making the relationship an opportunity for mutual flourishing.

But if intimacy implies vulnerability, it not only opens us to the hope of being loved for who we truly are; it also poses the risk of being trampled upon and abused. Just as there can be no truly intimate relationship without trust, so there can be no

intimate relationship without the risk of betrayal.

Many of us suffer—sometimes in hidden shame; other times publicly—through the wounds of broken marriages, betrayal in friendship, conflict in families, disappointment in partnerships, abuse in relationships where there is a power differential. Such suffering challenges us to receive the grace of forgiveness and to grow by investing courageously in new healthier relationships by still daring to be vulnerable.

But this deep woundedness can also become a stumbling block to deeper personal integration. This is particularly true in families. **Accompaniment in marital and family relationships is an urgent call to the Church**, especially since she herself cannot grow or

be authentic without schooling in sharing a life together, a home together, in becoming one community and family. **For better or for worse, what we learn in**

**our most intimate relationships is who we become in our ecclesial relationships**, whether in parishes, religious communities or lay movements.

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## Wounds in the Church as institution serving the Holy People of God

The Church as People of God is called to be a “community of friends” who journey together. **The Church’s *modus operandi* and structures must reflect this seeking to be a “pilgrim People” who journeys together. The local Church is wounded precisely where our structures, institutions and formal ways of proceeding do not facilitate, but rather contradict an ethos of friendship and mutuality.**

In his *Letter to the People of God*, (August 20, 2018), His Holiness

Pope Francis identified three deep wounds in the Church that are also our own: “sexual abuse, abuse of power and of conscience.” He also identified the root of these wounds as **the clericalism that characterises a way of functioning as “institutional Church.”**

Moreover, in Malta, the wounds of clericalism have taken on distinct forms that are particularly harmful because of our proximity to one another, our turbulent political history these past hundred years,



and the distinctiveness of our cultural dynamics often marked by a sense of existential need, the tendency to distrust the “stranger,” *pika* (rivalry) and even the urge to tribalise in us-against-them attitudes.

It is paramount that we acknowledge our frailties, that we name how we have inflicted wounds on each other in the past and, as Christians, seek to engage in a long process of mutual listening, seeking reparation, and, ultimately, praying for the power of the Spirit to be able to forgive one another.

At the same time, we must also not create further divisions in our *ecclesia* because we fail to come together, to serve together or even to pray together as brothers and sisters. **We must still learn to appreciate not only each other’s gifts, but**

**also the beauty of our particular callings—the distinct vocations of the clergy, religious and laity, but who share in Christ the same priestly, kingly and prophetic roots, and a common evangelical orientation to preaching and service, just as our Master did.**

As Jesus chided his disciples who disputed among themselves over who was the greatest:

“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; **rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves.** For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:25-27).

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## Wounds in the *ecclesia*, the Holy People of God

The Maltese Church is not just suffering from institutional and historical wounds. We are also a People wounded by lethargy, a sense of loss and confusion, because we seem to give too much importance to our own meagre

efforts, and not enough to the Holy Spirit’s work among us.

We are also wounded by excluding specific groups from the very life of the Church when we fail to accompany them in their struggles, but rather marginalise them or appear to cast them out through words that kill through condemnation rather than give life through Christ’s mercy and healing.

Pope Francis also invites us to ponder how salvific suffering is the deepest mystery of our faith.

Malta might no longer be *Kattolika*, but we ought to be grateful that this forced emptying of the “Church as institution” implies the possibility of rebirth of the “Church as true communion”; as true leaven for a new culture of encounter, where



we do not fear religious or political differences, but rather embrace all diversity as signs of God's infinite creativity and beauty.

Our evangelical zeal must be rekindled through a sense of common purpose that is the Gospel itself: not our nostalgia about a "Church" long gone, or our enthusiasm for a "Church" created in our own image, but through the humility of recognising how the Holy Spirit is seeking to rebuild the body of Christ in Malta.

The words of Pope Francis in the aforementioned Letter, show us the way of healing in our parishes, religious communities, lay movements and as one "Holy People of God." **Pope Francis also invites us to ponder how salvific suffering is the deepest mystery of our faith—including our local Church's spiritual angst in times of "confusion":**

"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it', said Saint Paul. By an attitude of prayer and penance, we will become attuned as individuals and as a community to this exhortation, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation. Mary chose to stand at the foot of her Son's cross. She did so unhesitatingly, standing firmly by Jesus' side. In this way, she reveals the way she lived her entire life. When we experience the desolation caused by these ecclesial wounds, we will do well, with Mary, 'to insist more upon prayer', seeking to grow all the more in love and fidelity to the Church (St Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 319). She, the first of the disciples, teaches all of us as disciples how we are to halt before the sufferings of the innocent, without excuses or cowardice. To look to Mary is to discover the model of a true follower of Christ" (Pope Francis, *Letter to the People of God*, 2018).





## Wounds in our social fabric

Every society is deeply wounded and ours is no exception. Indeed, it would be delusional on our part to pretend that our society is flourishing because we measure certain economic or social indicators but ignore other gauges of wellbeing. Indeed, even more dangerous are the dissonances and inconsistencies that we inculcate “as-a-matter-of-course,” when we claim to have an ethic of life or of social inclusion, or of free speech and democracy, but then, the facts speak louder than words as our actions glaringly betray our ideals.

The shocking assassination of a journalist and the murder in cold blood of a migrant of colour; the way many People take for granted “collective” practices like tax evasion,

graft and *omertà*; or how often they instinctively knit their social fabric through “friends of friends,” amoral familism, *pjaçiri* and the assumption that taking care of one’s own is more important than social responsibility... all illustrate the gap between our concrete lived reality and the Catholic ethos grounded in the common good, solidarity, the preferential option for the poor or even a basic civic sense where the “whole” (the wellbeing of the *polis* that serves all) is indeed greater than the sum of parts (or our individual interests).

**This is not because “the [hierarchical] Church” does not “speak” on matters of the common good; but perhaps because we as the People of**



**God, we ourselves in our social relationships, are failing in our witness of the Gospel of life, both through the way we communicate, but also through our very way of life.**

Even if the Church—in particular through her institutions—seeks to be light in our political and economic processes, the Church in her reality on the ground—our life in the city, on social media, at our places of work, in our homes and personal lives—is urgently called to give sufficient witness to how the

Kingdom of God becomes incarnate through our concrete choices that welcome the stranger, accompany the vulnerable in all their needs, and listen to how our biases inflict wounds in the very fabric of our shared lives together. A social and political conversion must begin within ourselves, with our being imbued with the Church's social teachings that challenge each one of us, personally and communally, to be a Church for and from the peripheries, by seeking their justice above our wealth, their wellbeing above our comfort.

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## **The wounded environment we live in**

Wounds in our social fabric are also manifested glaringly in our very land butchered for economic gain; in our air that is hard to breathe because of pollution; in the chaos on our roads and in our surroundings that makes it so difficult to savour once again the serenity that, in the past, we associated with the hidden elegance of our traditional villages or the rugged beauty of our natural landscape. We are living in an environment where ugliness

burdens the soul and makes the ordinariness of daily life that much more distressing.

These wounds to our senses and collective physical wellbeing are also augmented in the lifestyles we impose upon ourselves where there is always so “little time” for what is truly meaningful. It is as if the very landscape marked by technocracy imposes its tight fist around our very psyche, making us conform to





its dehumanising logic. Instead of humans safeguarding land through an ethos of mutual respect, humans savagely force their way upon land, until the landscape itself rebels and forces its horrors upon them.

This is the lament of the ecological encyclical *Laudato si'*, 106-110, that presents the “dominant technocratic paradigm” as having ravaged not only our environment, but also our political and social structures and, ultimately, our very imaginary of a good life. Through the delusion that we are on the “path to progress,” we embark instead on a cycle of decline leading to suicide.

Nor are we spared of this same angst in the “alternate environment” that we created where we are tempted “to escape.” The digital context—the augmented reality, in which we spend more and more of our time, including the time to “socialise”—is also marked by the same aesthetic of crass excess; an ethic of display where “image” replaces reality, and “self-

projection” replaces authenticity. In this context, aggressive posturing and agonism—rather than dialogue and conversation—at times mark our presence even as “Church.” It is indeed scandalous when what we as Church are being called to witness to—a Church that listens, welcomes, accompanies and goes forth—becomes representative of opposition, of the erection of walls, of an attitude of belittling the other, and where we barricade ourselves in our certainties and with the few “like us.”

The call to stewarding creation must start from small daily decisions that we take as persons and in our communities. **As Church in our small land, we trust that we can be sufficiently present in all society; that we can take concrete steps to reverse a cycle of ecological and cultural decline—offline and online—through a “mimesis of blessing.”** To what extent are we willing to preach the Gospel of life—to put our very selves on the line—where it is most urgent?

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## Our wounded spirit: the personal and collective soul disconnected from God

The source of our woundedness is ultimately sin—the pride that disconnects us from God in Godself, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. When we act as if God does not exist; when, as Church, we separate our “spiritual” life from “earthly” concerns, we wound our spirit that naturally desires to seek transcendence and worship the Father. As our sinfulness penetrates every aspect of our being, it also

corrupts our desire for God and our own worship loses its freshness and authenticity.

This is the tragedy of the woundedness in our experiences of communal and personal prayer. Prayer in the home, as the family gathers, passes on experiences of devotion, and teaches the discipline of personal contemplation. But when the home ceases to be



a space of prayer—that is, with personal and family time dedicated to nothing but praise of God—then we fail to learn “how to pray” and our public, communal prayer also suffers.

Every religion, in its *cultus*, has the obligation to manifest its worship of the divine. Prayer is a public act, where God is acknowledged as infusing our reality, and thus as justly demanding our worship. Thus, the way that we, as People of God in Malta, are seen to be praying says a great deal about our understanding of God and our witness of the Gospel.

The way we celebrate our yearly liturgical calendar is also striking. The true peak of our faith—the Easter season leading to

Pentecost—tends to be subdued in our collective experience of worship. More evocative are the symbols of suffering—Our Lady of Sorrows and Good Friday—that seem to have a felt spiritual resonance in our land. Much more exuberant are the public religious festivals associated with our famous (or infamous) *festi*.

Undeniably, *festi* bring People together binding them in a communal memory of celebration that goes back decades or centuries. This dimension of *festi* brings us back in touch with the deep wells of prayer that we have a duty to remember, honour and re-enact.

But when our religious *festi* become displays of might disconnected from the communal memory of religious devotion; when our daily



and weekly liturgies become too focused on rubrics and externals to the extent of becoming more akin to performance; or when our temples, memories in stone of our people's devotion, become the symbol of "the Church" that needs "care and maintenance" replacing the needs of the "ecclesial community" itself; then we risk succumbing to self-referentiality and forgetting the Holy Spirit who defines the Church and is the source of her true worship and prayer.

Temples, rituals and external celebrations should not replace the spiritual nourishment of the community that ultimately finds its roots in the Word of God, in the apostolic memory of the faith, and in the authentic celebration of the *mysteria* always made incarnate in a particular culture. Tradition cannot be reduced to "traditions" or traditionalism; nor can prayer fail to be truly spiritually transformative

leading us to experience slow purgation, and ultimately communion with the divine.

We tend to blame wounds to our communal and personal prayer on the ongoing rapid process of secularisation in our land. But secularity has many advantages, including an openness to the rights of all and the desire to live in peace notwithstanding differences. In our culture, we are still struggling to live a healthy separation of Church and State where the secular and religious imaginaries co-exist and even allow space for each other to flourish for the common good. But there are positive signs of growth.

Thus, the heart of spiritual angst might be deeper still. It is true that secularism, in and of itself, tends to bracket out of consciousness the desire for transcendence in a radical pursuit of immanence that makes the human the centre of reality.





But more serious than the threat of the secular, is when “the profane” takes on religious undertones or the “sacred” is commodified. In our hearts, the truly religious becomes constrained by an idolatry that stultifies the human spirit. Then, we risk pushing “mere belief” as “reason”; elevating “personal preferences” to “ultimate desires”; and conversely, reducing “the transcendent” to mere “ethics” or merely a “choice among many.”

This is the foundation of our deepening “culture wars” where sharp differences in our horizon of meaning, run the risk of becoming a profound wound among our People. We fail to have a common “open” narrative and remain a divided People.





## Discernment prompted by the Spirit

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight (Lk 24:30-31)

**T**he process of renewal of the Church in Malta is a journey that we walk together as “pilgrims” following the Holy Spirit’s promptings that we may truly become a Holy People of God who witnesses the joy of the encounter with Christ.



- Beginning with our **personal encounter with Christ**;
- with acknowledging our being personally called as “missionary disciples” through **Word and Service**;
- while appreciating how our personal call is the communal call of the *ecclesia*, that has been **lived in our land across centuries and through communal witness and worship**;
- as we re-appropriate the ecclesial attitudes of contemplation, reconciliation, formation and mission through pondering Christ’s pedagogy—of **becoming a Church that listens, welcomes, accompanies and always seeks to go forth**;
- as we embrace the **diversity of gifts** of our one People of God;
- as we ponder the culturally textured **“land” in which we are called to serve**;
- as we ponder the signs of the times and recognise **the wounds that Christ desires to heal...**
- **then the duty of the Church is to act in a decisive manner.**

Submission to Christ,  
our King,  
and his Holy Spirit  
whose “work” we  
desire to accomplish,  
whose “Life” the  
Church seeks to  
mediate.

The Church does not act technocratically, by planning the ways “we deem best, or most efficient and expedient”, but **through submission to Christ, our King, and his Holy Spirit whose “work” we desire to accomplish, whose “Life” the Church seeks to mediate.**

Acting as Church, that is, acting as disciples of Christ who are sent, demands judging and deciding not with our own (biased, because always sinful) eyes, but **in full harmony with the Spirit of God** who binds us as “the one Holy People of God.”

This process of submission and empowerment is what we term “discernment.” It is the fundamental trust that it is the Spirit who acts through the Church, and therefore that the Church’s efforts, accomplished with the utmost desire for authenticity, are never her own, and only for that reason will inevitably bear fruit in God’s time.

As Pope Francis teaches us: “Keeping our missionary fervour alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who “helps us in our weakness” (Rom 8:26). But this generous trust has to be nourished, and so we need to invoke the Spirit constantly. He can heal whatever causes us to flag in the missionary endeavour. It is true that this trust in the unseen can cause us to feel disoriented: it is like being plunged into the deep and not knowing what we will find. I myself have frequently experienced this. Yet there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting

him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place. This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful!" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 280)

Christian discernment is not merely a matter of reading a situation holistically, of grasping its salient moral features, or of judging and deciding what would be the best course of action and acting responsibly. All that is what every reasonable person—Christian or

not—can and must do. The discernment of the Christian implies reading reality through God's eyes and thus allowing the Holy Spirit to conform us to the mind of Christ.

Becoming "like Christ" and therefore his body is about being attuned to the Holy Spirit's action of life and always in contrast to the signs of death unleashed by dark spirits. The "discernment of spirits" is thus pivotal to all Christian discernment.

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## Personal discernment

Like the discernment of reasonable men and women, **Christian discernment also has multiple dimensions** that the *ecclesia* must seek to fulfill with the utmost desire for authenticity:

- As Christians we discern and act as individuals in our private matters.

For this reason, the Christian must be an ascetic developing the necessary discipline in his or her yearnings of body and soul to conform to Christ;

- As Christians we discern on behalf of the wellbeing of those who are entrusted to our care.



Parents discerning on behalf of their children is the paradigmatic example; but in any position of authority, prudence demands considering the wellbeing of others. Caring for the other through the eyes of Christ implies the “love of mercy” for the other and not just a spirit of justice;

- As Christians we also discern in our public roles, where we are responsible not only for persons under our care, but also for the righteous functioning of institutions that must serve the

common good. Being cognisant of the good that God desires from our institutions of governance, economy and public wellbeing—including the Church itself as an institution—implies acting in a way that respects the dignity of persons above all else;

- As Christians we are also called to discern in service of the good of our common home. Being stewards of the earth implies revealing the Beauty of the New Creation that the Holy Spirit seeks to accomplish.

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## Communal discernment

But, as Christians, we also discern **together as Church**. Communal discernment is necessary as together, **in the different communities where the Church**

**gathers**, we seek to read the signs of the times in light of the Gospel and thus to act in conformity with what the Holy Spirit demands of us.





- In the “domestic” Church, or wherever small communities gather. These communities may be families; particular religious communities bound to a convent or specific mission; small lay communities of friends who share the same charism;
- In “parishes”, or where the *ecclesia* gathers in its totality of clergy, lay and religious who together discern how the Spirit is calling them to serve and go forth in their particular territory. Analogous is the work in Church schools or other institutions of the Archdiocese;
- In “religious provinces or congregations” or “lay movements” where, as communities bound by charism to the universal Church but present locally,

the particular spirit of service that characterises the community, needs to be made incarnate in the particular local circumstances, under the promptings of the Spirit;

- In the Archdiocese as a whole, starting from its Curial structures, but also **through a process that guarantees true synodality**; a true gathering of the Maltese Church that together listens, prays, seeks to be truly open to becoming a medium for the Spirit’s work—no matter the cost.

The local Church is being invited to this conversion in our *modus operandi*, in our way of being “salt” in our land and “light” for its future, by truly becoming a **“discerning People of God”** who acts in his name, because **the sheep recognise the voice of their True Shepherd** (see Jn 10:14).



# Conclusion

We turn our gaze upon Our Mother

**L**astly, we turn our gaze upon Our Mother, who has always protected the community of the faithful in Malta. We pray for the intercession of the Apostle, our father in faith, as we keep the words of Pope Francis in our hearts:

“Faith also means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity. It means believing that he marches triumphantly in history with those who “are called and chosen and faithful” (Rev 17:14). Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the Kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree (see Mt 13:31-32), like the measure

of leaven that makes the dough rise (see Mt 13:33) and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds (see Mt 13, 24-30) and can always pleasantly surprise us. The Kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ's resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!

Because we do not always see these seeds growing, we need an interior certainty, a conviction that God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7). This certainty is often called "a sense of mystery". It involves knowing with certitude that all those who entrust themselves to God in love will bear good fruit (see Jn 15:5). This fruitfulness is often invisible, elusive and unquantifiable. We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. We may be sure that none of our

acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force. **Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many People come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement.** It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. **The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary.** Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time" (*Evangelii gaudium* 278-279).









# The Commitment of the Archdiocese 2020-2024



Following a process of consultation with the faithful, including the participants at the Diocesan Assembly 2019, and inspired by the process of renewal of *One Church, One Journey*, the Archdiocese of Malta is committing itself to initiating processes that will help sustain the efforts of every small ecclesial community in Malta.

The four pastoral attitudes will anchor how the local Church witnesses the Good News in today's Malta: a Church that listens, welcomes, accompanies and goes forth.

Each of these pastoral dynamics is necessary for the People of God in Malta as we seek to (re)inculturate the Gospel in our present-day reality. In the coming years, personally and communally, we will seek to hone each pastoral attitude for our growth in missionary discipleship.

**However, it is first necessary to seek conversion and renewal as we all ponder prayerfully every step of the eightfold process: from our (re)encounter with Christ, to learning how to discern in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

- In the next months in 2020, conversion and spiritual renewal in the **foundational dispositions** for being Church in Malta will be the focus of our journey. Every ecclesial entity or community is invited to ponder in prayer the eightfold process according to its particular charism and within its specific context;
- In 2021, the focus will be practicing the skills to become **a Church that listens** to the

Word, to one another and to our social reality;

- In 2022, the focus will be the art of reconciliation as we seek to embody the attitude of **a Church that welcomes** and in welcoming every "other," become one community;
- In 2023, the focus will be "walking with" fellow pilgrims as **a Church that accompanies** and therefore engages in ongoing Christian formation from cradle to tomb;
- In 2024, the focus will be our missionary zeal and bold creativity for new ways of inculturating the gospel as **a Church that goes forth** and becomes a more authentic prophetic light, but also hidden salt and life-giving leaven in our land.
- Finally, during the **2024 Diocesan Assembly** we will remember God's gestures of mercy, to savour all ecclesial graces received and to pray for signs to recognise where God will be calling his Church in Malta to continue her witness of the Good News. The Diocesan Assembly 2024 will launch a new process of "going forth" to respond to the times.

From 2020-2023, each Diocesan Assembly will also be an opportunity to deepen our experience of being "one Church" on "one journey" and thus to renew our commitment for missionary discipleship by listening, welcoming, accompanying and going forth.





# Laying the Foundations

Jesus' loving gaze continually renews and invites us to discern the presence of his Spirit

The deepening of our prayer, to which must be directed sufficient time, effort at formation and resources, is the primary focus to initiate ecclesial renewal.

We seek to open our hearts to Christ's presence, to allow him

to renew us and to receive the Father's love. The encounter with Christ transforms us into a discerning People whose thoughts and actions are one with his (Phil 2:5). Only thus can our private and public lives bear true witness to the joy of the Gospel.

Throughout this four-year process, our pastoral approach must be oriented towards the foundational grace of an encounter with Christ.

## **We are the People of God because we are a People of prayer**

To become one Church through the encounter with Christ, we give priority to praying with the **Word of God** as we contemplate the face of Jesus of Nazareth and his loving gaze upon us. As we recognise him when he seeks to open our eyes, we become a People who gaze upon everyone with his same loving gaze.

Like “every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven... who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Mt 13:52), we commit ourselves to strengthen established practices, like Lenten talks and retreats, while being open to new initiatives on a parish and diocesan level.

To prioritise praying with the scriptures, both personally and communally, the **Bible in Maltese** will be made more easily accessible in print format and online app. Bible ministry must be oriented to integrate the Word in all the Church’s pastoral ministry as promoted through its different entities; digital bible resources are to be created or be made available; and the exegesis of **the Emmaus pericope** is to be made accessible in various formats.

**SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:** Vicariate for Evangelisation; Malta Bible Society.

**Liturgy:** The People of God encounter the Risen Christ most fully during the celebration of the

liturgy. Together with experts in the field, the Bishops will continue the process to produce and publish liturgical texts in Maltese.

**SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:** Secretariat for Liturgy; College of Parish Priests.

**Adoration:** During adoration of the Blessed Sacrament we pray that Christ leads us into a deeper intimacy with the Father, in whom all things begin and end (*Gaudete et exsultate* 155). The commitment is to better formation of those who animate adoration gatherings: liturgical animators, liturgical commissions in parishes; priests.

**SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:** Pastoral Formation Institute, College of Parish Priests, Council of Religious Major Superiors (KSMR); FORUM of Lay Associations, Movements and Ecclesial Communities with their respective charisms.

**Growth in contemplative prayer:** Retreats during Advent and Lent for employees who work within Church institutions.

**SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:** Council of Religious Major Superiors (KSMR); FORUM of Lay Associations, Movements and Ecclesial Communities.

## **We are the People of God who discern**

Training in **discernment and spiritual direction** is to be provided to priests, members of religious orders and the laity, with particular emphasis on:

- personal vocational discernment;
- accompaniment of the faithful according to their particular circumstances;
- communal discernment within Church structures.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Society of Jesus; Centre for Ignatian Spirituality (CIS); Vicariate for Clergy and Parishes; College of Parish Priests.

**Restructuring** the Archbishop's Curia and other ecclesial structures so **synodality and discernment** become central to our mission:

- What does “consultative council” imply?
- What is the role of parish commissions?
- Do ecclesial structures reflect the true meaning of who the Church is called to be?
- How are structures facilitating the mission and vocation of our communities?

Renewal implies recognising what does not give life and letting go of it. Being creative in mission implies not being afraid to take risks and overcoming false prudence and pessimism.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: all entities in the Church under the guidance of the Archbishop.

## **We are the People of God in Malta united to the universal Church**

In continuation with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Diocesan Synod Documents of Malta 1999 – 2003, Pope Francis' *Evangelii gaudium* and this same process *One Church, One Journey*, the implementation of the Catholic Church's vision locally.

Pope Francis' pastoral visit will renew the determination of the Church in Malta to be a People of God who listens, welcomes, accompanies, and goes forth especially to the most vulnerable and excluded.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: the whole Church under the guidance of the Archbishop.





# A Church that listens: contemplation

A gaze that brings out the beauty in others

## Listening to the Word

We place the Word of God at the centre of our daily lives and of the Church's pastoral approach. Clear emphasis on the formation of the People of God through **diverse methods of prayer through scripture** so each one can respond to God's call for:

- conversion,
- obedience to Christ "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5),
- missionary zeal: seeing the world through the eyes of Christ.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Department of Sacred Scripture  
(Faculty of Theology); FORUM of  
Lay Associations, Movements and

Ecclesial Communities; Council of Religious Major Superiors (KSMR); Centre for Ignatian Spirituality (CIS); Malta Bible Society.

## Listening to one another

We nurture **trust** by engaging in active listening to facilitate communication, fellowship and growth as missionary disciples. In particular, the Bishops will listen actively to children and youths.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: The Bishops; Children's Diocesan Commission; Malta Catholic Youth Network (MCYN).

We listen to one another to grow in our common mission as Church in Malta. We will establish **a platform for mutual listening**, where representatives of the People of God (see chapter 5) together identify:

- the qualities and charisms that we are called to share with one another;
- opportunities and challenges in various areas of the mission of the Church in Malta;
- new ways of responding to these challenges and opportunities.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Vicar General together with representatives of all the entities.

## Listening attentively to our reality

We need to develop a **contemplative attitude** in our daily lives that leads to reading the signs of the times in our society. An **attitude of active listening** to today's realities is necessary to identify how and where we are called to be light, salt and leaven in Maltese society.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Discern; Justice and Peace Commission; Vicariate for Diaconia.

This will include establishing a **Poverty Observatory** in collaboration with secular entities that work in the social sector.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Vicariate for Diaconia; Discern.





# A Church that welcomes: reconciliation

A gaze that seeks the other... to bestow mercy

## **Welcoming one another**

**The art of dialogue:** we create opportunities for mutual conversation as one Church to discern how to **improve the services** we offer as part of the mission entrusted to us by the Lord. We practise the art of dialogue and mutual respect with all those

in society who hold **different worldviews and opinions.**

**SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:** The Bishops in collaboration with all Church entities, including groups and secular movements, as well as those who embrace different beliefs.



## Reconciliation

Emboldened by the power of the Risen Christ, we do not fear our wounds and pray for forgiveness and healing. We ponder **our collective narrative and history** to confront the scandals of division and abuse. Through mutual dialogue across all sectors of society, we seek the truth to hope for justice that leads to reconciliation. **Chapels will be identified to serve as spaces of reconciliation**, in particular where the Sacrament of Reconciliation can be celebrated.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Commission established for this purpose, in collaboration with Safeguarding Commission; Justice and Peace Commission; Vicariate for Evangelisation; Vicariate for Clergy and Parishes; Secretariat for the Laity.

**Safeguarding:** the publication and implementation of the new safeguarding policy to ensure that the Church is a safer and more secure place for children and vulnerable adults.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Safeguarding Commission.

## Becoming one community

We identify the attitudes and initiatives necessary, so all feel welcome in the Church.

**The poor:** as new experiences of poverty are revealed through the research of the Poverty Observatory, as Church, we will discern how to respond through concrete services.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Vicariate for Diaconia.

**People from other cultures:** we appreciate the gifts of all through creating opportunities for better integration, by providing more training for shared living in a pluralistic environment; initiating projects that foster collaboration and friendship; opening opportunities for inter-religious dialogue; and, while strengthening the services already being offered to asylum seekers and all migrants, addressing the causes of xenophobia, racism, exploitation and human trafficking.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Migrants Commission; Ecumenical Commission; Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue; Justice and Peace Commission; Vicariate for Evangelisation, especially its education entities.

**All vulnerable People:** proposals are to be presented for integrating better the most vulnerable into our communities: People with disability, those suffering from mental illness and the elderly.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION: Commission established for this purpose; Vicariate for Diaconia; Justice and Peace Commission.



# A Church that accompanies: formation

A gaze that welcomes and encounters the other

## Renewing pastoral work in parishes

Initiate a process of evaluation of parish ministry that:

- promotes being attentive to reality so all are **available for mission** understood from a much wider perspective;
- identifies the **obstacles** that hinder parish priests and

- clergy from giving priority to Evangelisation and *Diakonia*;
- carries out a study to establish pastoral priorities and how these can be reached while considering actual human resources, including the future number of ordained ministers and sacramental needs;

- provides assistance to priests to develop **a healthy rhythm of prayer and contemplation** to strengthen their pastoral zeal.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Vicariate for Clergy and Parishes;  
College of Parish Priests.

Study to determine **the training needs required for all pastoral workers**, including for new spheres of pastoral work in parish ministry: such as adult catechesis, social ministry, community building etc.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Pastoral Formation Institute;  
Vicariate for Clergy and Parishes;  
other entities according to the identified sectors.

## **Formation for all those called to ministry in the Church**

The wider formative implications for pastoral work as implied by the Process of Ecclesial Renewal: the understanding of what it means to be Church; the **formation required for all aspects of mission and witness** so proposals may be implemented.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Faculty of Theology; Archbishop's Seminary; Pastoral Formation Institute.

**Accompaniment of professionals employed in the education sector**, particularly in their calling to work in an environment that includes People of different faiths and diverse needs.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Spiritual Development in Schools;  
Secretariat for Catholic Education.

**Accompaniment of priests:** while strengthening the professional service that it provides to retired priests, 'Id-Dar tal-Kleru' can offer support to all **priests engaged in ministry**.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Vicariate for Clergy and Parishes;  
College of Parish Priests.

## **Formation of all disciples**

A collaborative effort among all sectors involved in formation to evaluate how changes in culture invite us to **new proposals and initiatives for lifelong catechesis**, from cradle to tomb.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Vicariate for Evangelisation;  
Secretariat for Catechesis;  
Technology Development Unit in the Archdiocese of Malta.

**Strengthening family ministry to provide better accompaniment to families.**

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Cana Movement; Belong Group.

Strengthening and creating **chaplaincy services** to offer spiritual support in schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly and corrective facilities in light of new cultural realities.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Pastoral Formation Institute; Faculty of Theology; Spiritual Development in Schools; ĊAM; Missio Malta; Franciscan Capuchin Friars.





# A Church that goes forth: mission as proclamation

Extending his gaze upon the whole land

## **The inculturation of the Gospel**

Studying the cultural context in present day Malta implies naming the challenges we face to inculturate the Gospel anew in our context, as well as a process of discernment to outline realistic strategies for evangelisation in parishes, schools,

and in all social contexts, including through art and local traditions. An *ad hoc* committee is to be set up to present proposals towards a **Christian digital presence and communication strategy** to draw guiding principles for a personal Christian authentic witness as well as an ecclesial institutional one in this new augmented reality.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Vicariate for Evangelisation; College of Parish Priests; Communications Office; Technology Development Unit of the Archdiocese of Malta; Beacon Media; other entities working in the identified sectors.

## Reinvigorating popular piety and religiosity

An *ad hoc* committee is to be set up to present proposals towards restoring the profound meaning of **religious symbolism, popular piety and religiosity** in Malta, so that through these popular expressions of the faith, we may strengthen the memory of our forebears and the roots of our people's initial encounter with Christ.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Vicariate for Evangelisation; Vicariate for Clergy and Parishes.

## Commitment to a culture of life and to promoting the dignity of every human being

The Church, in collaboration with secular groups, must identify and speak out in areas where the dignity of the person is being threatened. New initiatives to **address the root causes of poverty** are to be promoted, whether to nurture new attitudes, promote training, or take concrete decisions. The Church's own *Diakonia* entities and new initiatives must focus on the most vulnerable, rather than replicate what the State, NGOs or the private sectors are already fulfilling well.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Vicariate for Diaconia; College of Parish Priests; Diocesan Pastoral Council; Justice and Peace Commission.

As we interpret current challenges and tensions in Malta in light of the Gospel, and as we seek to respond to people's preoccupations and offer hope, the Church must initiate and **promote dialogue with all People of good will** to encourage collaboration, ethical reflection and policy making that safeguard honesty, integrity, justice and the common good through good governance.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Justice and Peace Commission; Inter-diocesan Environment Commission.

## Working towards an integral ecology

**Participation in eco-friendly initiatives and promotion of an integral ecology** are to be encouraged among parishes, Church entities, lay movements and religious congregations. A concerted process of reflection is necessary to determine how **properties owned by the Church may be best utilised** while keeping the most vulnerable in mind.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Inter-diocesan Environment Commission; FORUM of Lay Associations, Movements and Ecclesial Communities; College of Parish Priests; Vicariate for Diaconia.

In line with the initiative 'The Economy of Francesco', ongoing reflection on how **the economy can truly serve humanity and protect the environment**.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION:  
Justice and Peace Commission.

