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PREPARING FOR THE SYNOD ON THE FAMILY 2015

COMMUNIQUÉ BY THE MALTESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

We are all grateful for Maltese and Gozitan families. As a Church and also as a society, we are indebted towards families because they are our greatest resource. Even though our family life may not always be a bed of roses, we are convinced that there are more roses than thorns. The Church wishes to contribute so that all that is beautiful and that enriches our families may continue to flourish. Our faith in Jesus Christ serves as an impetus to encourage those families which are wounded to take heart, because with Christ's healing touch, their wounds may be healed and they can once again thrive.

Pope Francis' interest and love for the family have inspired him to call two Synods on the family. Following the Extraordinary Synod which took place last October, a few weeks ago the Pope sent us the final document, together with a questionnaire, in order that the people of God in several countries may reflect and discuss the points which are outlined in this document. In the Pope's own words, the aim for this is that practical solutions may be found for several difficulties and challenges which the family faces. This will be our contribution towards the Synod which will take place next October, entitled "The call and mission of the family in the Church and today's world". Towards mid-April, as your bishops, we shall submit to the Synod Secretariat, the results of our reflections. Following this, the working document for the next Synod will be drawn up.

In order that the people of God in these islands, may participate in this preliminary phase of the coming Synod, we are proposing the following initiatives:

1. A translation into Maltese of the *Lineamenta* (published on the Vatican website 'vatican.va' on 9 December 2014) will be uploaded on the websites of both dioceses, as well as the website of the Secretariat for the Laity. Everyone is invited to reflect upon and respond to the Pastoral Secretariat on the questions contained in the Lineamenta on – pastoral.secretariat@maltadiocese.org.
2. In the parishes, people will have an opportunity to participate in this preliminary process of the Synod. Besides praying for the intentions of the Synod, one may reflect upon and offer feedback through a parish group, eg the parish Assembly, or any other group.



During January 2015, parish priests of Malta and Gozo will attend a live in. In the course of this activity, they will be informed of ways in which the parishes may participate.

3. We have requested the Faculty of Theology to set up and coordinate two working groups on two practical aspects (the first and third parts) of the *Lineamenta*: (a) the present situation: the context and challenges to family life, (b) the pastoral perspective. These groups will be made up of lecturers from the Faculty of Theology and other Faculties as well as other persons who are able to contribute in this field. The aim is for these groups to submit in writing their reflections in connection with the questions contained in the *Lineamenta*, by the end of February 2015.
4. The Interdiocesan Theological Commission is invited to focus upon the questions contained in the second part of the *Lineamenta* (The Gospel of the Family) and reply to them by the end of February 2015.
5. Contacts will be set up with associations/movements/groups within the Church so that they too may participate in this consultation process by offering their reflections upon the *Lineamenta*. Particular attention will be given to those entities which are directly involved in the field of the family (e.g. the Cana Movement, the John Paul II Institute for the Family).
6. The Council of Religious Major Superiors are also being contacted so that the Religious Congregations in Malta and Gozo may offer their contribution in the light of the *Lineamenta*.
7. As part of the preliminary process for the Synod of Bishops, there will also be a public conference on 9 January 2015, organized by the Jesuits in Malta on the theme '*Pastoral care of families in difficult and painful situations*'. The speaker will be Pablo Guerrero Rodriguez S.J. Any points of interest which may emerge from this Conference will also be included.
8. Also included in the preliminary process for the Synod will be the contributions arising out of the Regional Conference which will take place in Malta on 20 February 2015, organized by the *European Society for Catholic Theologians* and the Faculty of Theology, where this theme will be discussed.
9. During the months of January to March 2015, other meetings will take place during which qualified persons will be invited to offer their contributions in order that further feedback may be collected upon the questions which are included in the *Lineamenta*.



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Archdiocese of Malta

We appeal to many people to participate in these activities and in any further initiatives which may be organized so that this discussion may be wide spread and interesting; we also encourage families and ecclesial communities to recite the prayer which Pope Francis wrote for this occasion. As we entrust our efforts into the hands of the Holy Family, we wish you all a Happy New Year.

✠ **MARIO GRECH**

Bishop of Gozo

President of the Maltese Episcopal Conference

✠ **CHARLES JUDE SCICLUNA**

Titular Bishop of San Leone

Apostolic Administrator of Malta