



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Archdiocese of Malta

31st December 2014
144/2014

A BLESSING ON OUR PEOPLE!

HOMILY BY BISHOP CHARLES J. SCICLUNA

DURING END OF YEAR THANKSGIVING MASS

As we conclude a memorable year in the history of Malta, our beloved country and nation, I would like to offer a short reflection on today's first reading from the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

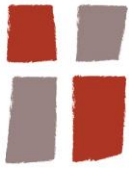
The reading is taken from the Book of Numbers (Chapter 6, verses 22-27): *"The Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron and his sons, thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace".*

The Lord orders Moses to teach his brother Aaron, chosen to be High Priest, how to bless the people of Israel. This blessing is a threefold invocation on the whole people of Israel.

I would like to offer it today as a blessing on the beloved people of Malta, at the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015.

The Lord bless you and keep you:

May the people of Malta continue to recognize that the Lord is their shield and their comfort. It is not outdated to turn to God for our protection and for our guidance. Let us recognize God as our Creator and our Saviour. The Lord who created us, loves us dearly. He will not betray us, neither will he fail us. Fifty years ago, the Maltese people hailed their new-found independent statehood by declaring that their National Anthem was to be the prayer to God penned by Dun Karm. Long may this happy decision continue to express the intimate ethos of our identity as a nation-state in an admirable synthesis where faith does not hinder, but rather guarantees the religious freedom and freedom of conscience of all and sundry.



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The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

The second invocation of the blessing reminds the people of Israel that God is close to each and every one of us and that he is willing to show us his mercy and his love. Let us thank God for the many mercies and blessings He has endowed us with during the last year, 2014. At the close of a year of national commemorations and celebrations, let us thank the Lord for the gift of decades of democratic governance to which so many worthy politicians of different views dedicated their energy and prowess.

The Church in Malta thanks the Lord for the gift of the pastoral stewardship of His Excellency Monsignor Paul Cremona OP, the Archbishop Emeritus, whose humble kindness has brought and still brings so much warmth to so many hearts.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace:

The third and last invocation reminds us that the Lord is willing to show us his great favour by giving us the gift of peace. Peace is a precious gift indeed. We may and should toil and strive to bring true reconciliation among us Maltese as a nation. But all our efforts will be futile if they are not based on truth and social justice, and if they are not blessed by the Lord. This is what we pray at the conclusion of the National Anthem, as we ask the Lord to strengthen unity and peace among Maltese people. Is it not perhaps opportune to ask ourselves whether in the name of secularization we may have boarded the speed train to a certain secularism that shuns God and disdains His guidance as a perceived hindrance to our utopian dreams of liberal progress?

What light will guide us in the coming year 2015? What choices will we make as a people and as a nation? This Co-Cathedral, revered former Conventual Church of the Knights of Malta, is a monument to confessional fidelity which along the centuries fought for freedom and matured into resilient tolerance without betraying its roots. May it stand as a reminder of the Lord's blessings that have wrought the sinews of our landscape beautiful and made our culture duly proud!

✠ Charles Jude Scicluna

Titular Bishop of San Leone

Apostolic Administrator of Malta