



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE BY ARCHBISHOP CHARLES J. SCICLUNA

Peace be with you! This same greeting of peace was announced to the shepherds by the angels on the holy night of Christmas, when they sang: “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all men of good will” (Lk 2, 14).

Dear Maltese and Gozitan brethren, it is my pleasure to greet you from ‘Id-Dar tal-Providenza’. In this Year of Mercy, I pray that this Christmas will be a joyful one, full of mercy. Fifty years ago, Monsignor Mikiel Azzopardi was inspired to open up this home, which welcomed tens of people with special needs, who require our love and solidarity. ‘Id-Dar tal-Providenza’ is a wonderful monument of love and generosity by the people of Malta and Gozo.

This Year of Mercy is an opportune time for us to carry on showing mercy with one another. God showed his greatest mercy towards us when he sent his Son made man, to redeem us from our sins. We are indebted to the Lord; we all need to ask Him for forgiveness for our trespasses. His mercy serves as a balm for our hearts and encourages us to pursue our life journey. Yet, it is also a wonderful thing for us to carry out acts of mercy with one another on a daily basis and not just during the Christmas season. Such acts of mercy are a sign of our concrete love: by offering drink to those who are thirsty, by feeding those who are hungry, by visiting those who are alone.

During these days, many times I think of our elderly who are keen to meet their relatives - their grandchildren, their children - so that together they may celebrate these beautiful feasts. We all know how difficult it is to live in solitude, and it is a wonderful gesture to commit ourselves to visiting those who are on their own so that they may find company. Let us think of these people: even by phoning them or by sending a message, or a visit which might require time - a precious gift which we should also share.

We also show mercy when we welcome foreigners amongst us. Let us also remember so many Maltese families who sought a new beginning in foreign lands - our dearest emigrants who felt it was necessary to leave their homeland. It took great courage for them to leave their homeland and seek a future in other countries, to build a new life. How wonderful it is

to welcome those foreigners who live amongst us: let us welcome them and treat them with respect, regardless of their race or colour. Why should a person who is not Maltese receive a lower salary than a normal citizen who is also covered by the laws governing social security? This Christmas, let us also strive to show concrete mercy with one and all.

You are aware that we, your Bishops, have opened the doors of mercy of our respective cathedrals and other churches. That pilgrimage which leads one to the door of mercy is not only a symbolic journey; it is also a journey of commitment, a commitment which we all undertake during this year. It is a commitment to change our lifestyle and practise mercy. How wonderful it would be if, during this Christmas season, we were to practice the spiritual acts of mercy by sharing our knowledge with others, by offering sound advice to those who ask for it, by being patient even in adversity. After all, our patience in small things is a reflection of the Father's patience towards us.

As we look upon the grotto of Bethlehem and admire Baby Jesus, let us pray for the grace that this Christmas will be for us one that is full of joy and mercy.

I impart my pastoral blessing on each and every one of you.

✠ **Charles J. Scicluna**

Archbishop of Malta