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CHURCH HANDS OVER PROPERTY TO HOSPICE MALTA

WORK TO COMMENCE ON MALTA'S FIRST STATE-OF-THE-ART ST MICHAEL HOSPICE

Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna formally handed over the Church premises known as Adelaide Cini Institute in St Venera to the Chairperson of Hospice Malta, Maria Gatt, for the establishment of St Michael Hospice, the first state-of-the-art complex to provide comprehensive palliative care.

The ceremony was held on the feast of St Michael the Archangel, on Sunday 29th September, in the same building in which the first patients are expected to be received in two years' time following the necessary renovation works. Fundraising for this ambitious project is already underway and works are expected to commence in the coming weeks.

The Church property including the existing building and gardens cover a total floor area of 11,000 square metres and is valued at around €8 million, with much more funds needed to renovate the complex over the coming years.

Archbishop Scicluna said that this initiative was inspired by the Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis in 2015. "St Michael Hospice will be a place in which the door of mercy will never close, reminding us of God's tangible mercy in our lives." The Archbishop appealed to the Maltese people to be generous towards this project which, he added, is a timely reminder of the right to life and the dignity of the human person.

The Chairperson of Hospice Malta, Maria Gatt said, "Statistics are numbers but they are people! Cancer affects 1 in 3 of us and at Hospice Malta we get 60 new patients per month. With the majority of patients undergoing their care and treatment locally there clearly is the need for St Michael Hospice! St Michael Hospice is a necessity, and one that the Maltese population deserves. We are determined to renovate to exacting standards, comparable to the best Hospices abroad which we have already visited. We are under no illusions of the complexity of this project, but we know that we can rely on the legendary generosity of our nation to fulfill this 'dream' which is what our loved ones deserve."

Through St Michael Hospice complex, Hospice Malta will expand its present community services to over 10,000 visits per year to patients and their families. With the increase in space, the new premises will also allow for an expansion of the present Day Therapy services from the current 700 sessions to over 2,000 sessions annually as well as the provision of new therapies and services.

The ultimate objective of the enhancement of the community palliative care services offered by Hospice is to allow patients to remain in their own homes in the community at this most vulnerable time and in turn to reduce the burden through the avoidance of unnecessary referrals to hospital. St Michael Hospice will also offer an in-patient unit facility to cater for such needs.

Educational training courses for the continuous development of Hospice professional care team as well as other Health Care professionals will also be delivered from the Education Department to be developed within St Michael Hospice in Santa Venera.

For 30 years since its foundation in 1989, Hospice Malta's primary role has been the provision and promotion of palliative care services to patients suffering from cancer, motor-neuron disease, and end-of-life cardiac, respiratory, renal and liver diseases. These services are offered through a professional interdisciplinary team. The patient and family-centred care offered targets the relief of pain and other physical symptoms as well as emotional, psycho-social and spiritual issues.

Hospice Malta, a registered NGO with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, offers all of its services free of charge to patients in Malta and Gozo. For more information and donations visit hospicemalta.org.