

Pastoral Letter

of

H.L. Mgr. Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo

Pastoral Visit

“We Meet the Love of God”

Dears,

On Friday, 11th October, the Feast of the Consecration of our Cathedral, I am initiating a Pastoral Visit in the Diocese. During this experience, which will take place over two years, I will try to follow the example of our Lord Jesus, who said to the Church of Laodicia: “See, I am at the door and am knocking; if someone hears and opens the door, I will enter and eat with him, and he will eat with me” (Apoc. 3,20). For me, the Pastoral Visit is an opportunity to literally seek to tread on the doorstep of many in order to be close to them.

I will visit you for one purpose: so that together we meet the love manifested in Christ. Although, to you I am the Bishop, I am like you a disciple of Jesus Christ; and, as our father Paul says, I am visiting you without any pretension except that I know the crucified Christ (see 1 Cor 2,2).

One would expect that I will knock on the door of our churches. That is what I will be doing: not to see if there are cracks in the church building, but to personally meet you, members of every Christian community, who are the living stones constituting the Church of Christ (see Pt 2,5). I want to hear from you what you think about the Church and what you expect from it nowadays. I wish that we seek together how we can open more channels through which God’s mercy could reach us.

I wish to knock on your door, dear families, because I am convinced that in your homes important events are developing, the effects of which on the members of your own families, on the Church and on society are not easy to evaluate. I wish to visit your homes to see at close quarters the miracles of love that occur in them, and also to receive the tears of broken hearts, as in the case of families in which there are

burdens arising from the upbringing of children, cracked relationships, economic burdens, irregular marriages, sickness and so many other situations of suffering.

I wish to knock on your doors, dear adolescents, our young persons, in order to absorb your enthusiasm, to listen to your desires for a better world, to answer your questions about Christ and his Church, and to help you not to allow anyone to rob your heart of hope.

I wish to knock on your door, dear sick persons, sit beside you, hear your experience of suffering, and offer consolation and the presence of Christ Crucified.

I wish to knock also on your doors, you who think that you are distant from the Church and, perhaps, also from God. I am convinced that, in spite of everything, you are also seeking. The Church, too, never stops seeking to renew itself; and therefore I believe that you, too, could contribute in this visit.

I wish to come in and talk to those of you who feel emarginated or not understood in the teaching of the Gospels, and to listen to you in order to start a dialogue between us.

I wish to knock also on the closed doors of those who suffered through the unchristian attitude of some member of the church. I am visiting you as the Shepherd of this flock to ask for your forgiveness when I learn about your heartache.

I see in my hands the knocker on the doors that open the worlds of work, education and culture, sport, entertainment, politics... It is in these environments that today's human life is evolving. None of these human experiences should be denied the saving force of Jesus Christ. For the leaven of the Gospel to raise this knead, it is the Church's duty to discover the hopes and fears of those who find themselves in these situations, to hear them with love and to offer them assistance.

I am going out to knock also on the doors I have seen shutting during the last eight years – maybe because of mistakes I made due to my limitations, maybe because of pastoral choices I had to make, perhaps also because of the weed that was sown to choke the bishop's ministry. I feel that there is no closed door that cannot reopen. I am convinced that through sincere dialogue we can clarify many things.

In other words, I wish to knock on the door of the heart of every person, whoever you are. The longer this door has been locked, the more I see the need to approach it in the name of Jesus Christ and help open it for the sake of God's love and mercy.

I am doing this, not to intrude into the private or public life of our people, but to be happy with those who are happy and to weep with those who are weeping; not to preach to them, but to listen to them; not to judge them, but to offer my solidarity. I will visit with the same attitude of Jesus who "does not break a weak branch, and does not extinguish a flickering flame, until he brings justice to fruition" (Matt. 12.20).

I know that I do not have an answer to everything, but I am ready to walk with you side by side.

I have great hope that there is a lot of goodness around us. I wish that, through this Pastoral Visit, I confirm you in your goodness, so that, in spite of everything, you build up courage and prevail over all sorts of feelings of hopelessness and stagnation in every aspect of life, particularly in Christian life.

I assure you that I am coming to knock on the door with the heart of a father who cares for all his children night and day, especially those who closed their heart to him. At the same time, I believe that when you will open your door to me, fully or partly, you are going to help me grow in my paternity toward you.

I realise that this visit will not be an easy commitment. In order to achieve this visit I will need not just physical, but also spiritual energy. Later on, I will be able to send you more details about the time and way I will be coming to meet you. In the meantime, while I thank those who will be accompanying me during this Visit, I trust in your fervent and constant prayers to God with the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church.

Given from the City of Victoria, today, 4th October 2013, Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi.

+Mario
Bishop of Gozo

Grech

Mgr.
Chancellor

Salv

Debrincat