



The Holy See

VISITA PASTORALE A MALTASALUTO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II AI FEDELI DAVANTI AL SANTUARIO MARIANO DI MELLIEHALa Valletta (Malta) - Sabato, 26 maggio 1990

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,¹ I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet the *parents and relatives of the priests, religious and laity of Malta engaged in pastoral work abroad*. The dedicated response of so many of Malta's sons and daughters to the Lord's call is a cause for great rejoicing, and bears witness to the spiritual fruitfulness of the Christian faith which the Apostle Paul brought to these islands so long ago. In the name of the whole Church *I thank each one of you for all you have done through your prayer, your encouragement and your own sacrifice* to help these men and women to discern and embrace the will of God in their lives. It is very fitting that we should come together in prayer *at Mellieha, the oldest Marian Sanctuary on the island of Malta*. At the Annunciation, the Virgin of Nazareth freely accepted God's invitation to become the Mother of his Son (Cfr. *Luc. 1, 38*). After our Lord's Ascension into heaven, Mary was united with the Apostles in prayer as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus had promised to send (Cfr. *Act. 1, 14*). In the mysterious unfolding of God's plan of salvation, we know that the Mother of Jesus has a privileged part to play. Trusting in her maternal love and protection, we do not hesitate to commend to her prayers the intentions of those who have followed Christ's command to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel" (*Marc. 16, 15*).

2. Dear friends: today's gathering is an occasion for us to recall with gratitude *the role of the Christian family* in fostering the vocations of its members and in advancing the mission of the Church. The Second Vatican Council reminded us that the family can truly be called a "domestic Church" (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium, 11*), since it reflects many aspects of the entire body of believers. As a community of faith, hope and love, the family ought to be, in a very special way, "a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates" (P^{AULI VI} *Evangelii Nuntiandi, 71*). Can it be said that one of the reasons why your families have given so many missionaries to the Church is that you have a lively sense of your *dignity and mission as baptized members of Christ's Body*, sent forth to bring the Gospel message to all whom you meet? Each Christian can apply to himself the words of Saint Paul: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor. 9, 16*). Even in a country like Malta, where the Catholic faith has flourished for centuries, there is a need in every generation for men and women who, amid the ordinary circumstances of daily life, make evident to their neighbours the mystery of God's love as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ. *May Christian families continue to bring the leaven of the Gospel to the whole of Maltese society!*

3. The Apostle Peter urges us all to be "good stewards of God's varied grace" (*1 Petr. 4, 10*), using the gifts

which we have received for one another's benefit. As we recall the generosity with which Malta's many missionaries have shared the faith which they had first received, *we can truly thank God* for the rich harvest which he has reaped through their witness. Today there are several hundred priests, religious and lay people from Malta who are bringing the light of Christ to Australia, North and South America, Africa, India and many parts of Europe. In addition, Maltese families who have emigrated are supplying vocations to their countries of adoption, while Maltese religious houses abroad are now receiving vocations from among the people they went forth to serve. As we rejoice in their service of the Lord and his Church, *let us never cease to assist these missionaries by our spiritual solidarity in prayer and works of penance*. In particular, let us ask God to bless a hundredfold (Cfr. *Marc.* 10, 30). those of their number who endure all sorts of trials for the sake of the Gospel. And in union with Mary, let us pray that the Lord will raise up many others to follow them in the work of leading all people to the knowledge of the truth (Cfr. *1 Tim.* 2, 4), so that "the glory of God which shines in the face of Jesus Christ might shed its light upon all men through the Holy Spirit" (*Ad Gentes*, 42). To all of you go my deep affection in the Lord and my special Apostolic Blessing.

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