



Laudato Si'
Special Anniversary Year
2020-2021

Meeting
25 June 2020

Azzjoni Kattolika Maltija

Malta is a small country in the Mediterranean sea, with a population of around half a million people, most of them living on mainland Malta and on the island of Gozo.

It is rich of historic places and surrounded by the beautiful Mediterranean sea. Its climate, history, cultural heritage, and beaches makes it a quite popular tourist attraction. Recently the number of tourists visiting Malta each year exceeded 2.5 million.

The great economic growth experienced in the recent years brought with it an exponential increase in the population, in an already over-populated country. Thus, creating an ecological disaster in terms of air and sea pollution, an irrational building strategy which is destroying the natural environment, the uglification of urban areas, with high-rise buildings creating steel and concrete prisons for people living in surrounding houses.

These problems, together with serious and vast problems of corruption which infiltrated the highest institutions of the country; misleading propaganda by certain public institutions and businesses; an education system which is mainly aimed at modelling people "to fit in" society; and the indoctrination of liberal/ neo liberal and gender ideologies, which are more set to create a new regime of thinking, rather than fight for equality and freedom; are creating and fostering more classes of vulnerable and poor people.

Even in a situation which seems quite desperate for our Islands, we thank God for providing people who dedicated their life and energy to uncover corruption, work for justice, advocate for vulnerable and weak people, defend life from its conception till death. These are people who through their perseverance and sacrifice, are managing to drive the institutions to take concrete action and to ensure a more just society.

Notwithstanding this, many people are feeling lost. The environmental awareness among the population is perhaps the highest in recent history, however many still do not perceive the interconnectedness between their faith, environmental problems, the lifestyles they adopt, , poverty, social cohesion, human dignity and wellbeing. Perhaps it is the time when we, as Church in Malta, as lay people, work to create concrete models where Laudato Si` is transformed in a lifestyle that offer an alternative way of doing things. We need to show that we are convinced that the Gospel transforms us in the most concrete ways. This will require us to abandon the "convenient normality" that is based on an unjust and unfair economic model. We will be

needed to walk down the path of St Francis of Assisi and leave behind us our securities and let our Master to lead us to new pastures.

Our communities need models that are built on the explication of the connectedness of our faith, the education process, family life, daily decisions, our respect for the environment, our commitment to social justice and our love for one another. When people see and experience alternative ways of life, they can understand better, appreciate them, and thus will be more inclined to adopt them even on a larger scale, in their families, businesses and perhaps on regional or national levels. These models are already being developed in several countries, with some encouraging results, as they are getting people from different fields and backgrounds to collaborate together. An example of this is the Casa Comune, *Laudato Si'*, *Laudato qui*, in Avigliana, Italy. However, other traces of such efforts can be found in recent history, such as the project developed in Barbiana by Don Lorenzo Milani; not to mention the first Christian communities, which were founded on the principles of sharing, justice and love.

Questions:

- How much do you think that concrete models of alternative lifestyles can be effective to encourage the transformation being indicated by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*?
- Looking at what Don Lorenzo Milani did in San Donato and especially in Barbiana, how important is it that our efforts to propose alternative lifestyles have the poor and the most vulnerable as protagonists?