



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Archdiocese of Malta

17th December 2016

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**ADDRESS AT THE CONCERT BY THE MALTA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
AT THE PAPAL BASILICA OF SAINT PAUL OUTSIDE THE WALLS, ROME**

Your Excellency President of Malta,
Your Eminences, Your Excellencies,
Honourable Ministers and Deputies of the Republic of Malta,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Beethoven dedicated his *Missa Solemnis* to the Archduke Rudolph of Austria, Cardinal Archbishop of Olmutz, who was the principal patron of the composer as well as his student and friend. On a copy presented to the Archduke, Beethoven inscribed these words: "Von Herzen — Möge es wieder — Zu Herzen gehn!" ("Arising from the heart, may it return to the heart"). I am certain that the music performed this evening by Maestro Brian Schembri, by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, by the Soloists and the Choir of the *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* will also arise from their hearts with the hope that it will pierce the hearts of each and every one of us.

For us Maltese, this Papal Basilica, in which we are gathered, is a sacred space that truly speaks to our hearts. The Apostle Paul, our Father in faith, is buried here! The words that Paul wrote to the Corinthians speak also for us Maltese: "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church" (1 Cor 4: 15-17).

Certainly, Paul did not need to send Timothy or anyone else to Malta, because he had left Publius, the Protos of our island who welcomed and hosted Paul and his 275 fellow travellers and survivors of the shipwreck with "generous hospitality for three days" (Acts 28:7). Publius who was a direct witness of the healing power of Paul's words, is venerated as the first shepherd of the Church in Malta. As successor of Saint Publius, here, in the house of Paul,

"I-Appostlu Missierna", I raise my humble prayer so that all of us, with the grace of God, remind one another of the paths that Paul has shown us in Christ. May the Gospel of reconciliation that pours from the pierced heart of Jesus enter our hearts so that "we should be holy and blameless ... in charity" (Eph 1:4).

On behalf of the Church in Malta, I extend my greetings to the Holy Father on his 80th birthday today. To all of you here present, I wish you a blessed and happy Christmas!

✠ **Charles J. Scicluna**

Archbishop of Malta