

A Legacy of Gentleness

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History will most likely treat Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna more kindly than local contemporary figures. Although disguised or undisguised contempt through caricatures and memes may linger for a little while, truth be told he stands out as a brilliant mind and a kind soul who rises to every occasion in defence of truth and authenticity. His is a strong voice in favour of life and of the voiceless. Performing prophetic gestures to put a humane message across gradually became his hallmark. One fine example is the ‘good neighbourhood dinner’ to foster tolerance and inclusion. Many a time, he encourages a sense of duty and basic civics. Archbishop Scicluna may often be viewed as all smiles, characteristic of his bubbly personality; nevertheless, the power of the word is equally evident in his leadership and guidance in the public square. Gentleness takes courage and he never misses a single opportunity to stand up, speak, and be counted.

Let God be God and let humans be fully human. Such is the challenge and hope which Archbishop Scicluna over the last decade strove to present to a cosmopolitan Malta and a local Church in deep need of rejuvenation. His ‘cry’ to let God be God is an invitation to receive a liberating gift enabling its recipients to inquire very carefully into the understanding and acceptance of the Christian God in

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their lives. His promotion of *Amoris laetitia* in view of the very rich and complex reality of family life today is just one clear example. Furthermore, reminding human beings to become fully human is a refreshing attempt to tackle possible illusions that promise no future. In short, what is being proposed through his episcopate is a gentle, timely, solicitous nudge to bring about a communal effort to build a healthy society characterised by inspiring essential values, and above all responsible individuals ready to care for each other, while moved by the selfless love and hope so manifest in the Gospel.

In the footsteps of Pope Francis, the leader of the Catholic Church in Malta seeks to gently reassert the value of the joy of the Gospel ahead of the major challenges of today's world, and Malta in particular. In the words of Saint Francis de Sales, nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength. What follows here is a genuine attempt to understand Scicluna's legacy of gentleness manifest in his quest for *truth*, in his emphasis on *service*, and in fostering a spirit of *freedom*. His thought may not be systematic as he prefers to share his reflections inspired by the daily Gospel or informed by the celebration of particular occasions. Nevertheless, the highlights of his thought can be traced in his ministry of the Word principally captured in the five volumes titled *Kelma ta' Habib* (Maltese for *A friendly word*).

This reflection proceeds in three steps. First, there is a reflection on Christians' calling to stand firm in *faith*; to profit from God's *mercy* and his relentless tenderness; and to *rejoice* in the Lord with all one's heart. These emerge as a concrete response to an alienated society in an honest quest for truth. Secondly, a reflection unfolds about one of Scicluna's favourite themes, that is service to the people. The limelight here shifts onto the State and the Church as servants of society; onto good governance, as well as onto the consolidation of values. Thirdly, there follows a reflection on fostering a spirit of *freedom*. This is brought about by passing from a Christianity of belonging to a Christianity of experience; from a superficial religiosity to bearing witness to the Gospel; and finally, to give primacy to faith over belief and traditions.

In a foreign land

When Monsignor Scicluna received the baton from his predecessor on 27 February 2015,¹ he inherited a battered Church that had for some

¹ Archbishop Paul Cremona had resigned for health reasons. Scicluna had been appointed Auxiliary Bishop by Pope Benedict XVI since 6 October 2012.

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time been dealing above all with two major issues: divorce and same-sex marriage. Divorce was introduced following a referendum in 2011, while same-sex marriage was legalized in 2017. Both occasions led to an ecclesial soul-searching and a general self-critique of society. Malta had by then undergone numerous legal and economic reforms, and had also seen its physical landscape being changed drastically, particularly through high-rise buildings, its work force, traffic, immigration, and inflation. The Church's corresponding adjustment to these new realities had been markedly slow. Nonetheless, all this spearheaded the Church under Archbishop Scicluna's leadership to gradually embark on a journey of pastoral conversion that would nurture its 'missionary transformation' and to become a 'prophetic Church' that dares to speak up in the public square.

The main challenge facing the Church involves a renewal of its relevance in a changing society, in the light of the global changes affecting the institution as a whole. When in 2018 a Church census revealed that around 40% of Catholics attend Sunday mass regularly, Scicluna called for necessary changes in the light of the pastoral plan to proclaim the Good News. This led to the launch of a working document of a Pastoral Plan by the Archdiocese of Malta entitled *One Church, One Journey – A process of ecclesial discernment 2020-2023* indicating four main priorities for the Church: to listen, to welcome, to accompany, and to always go forth without fear in spreading the Good News.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted not only the publicization of the pastoral plan, but also dampened the overall Christian spirit as many people stayed indoors and eventually moved away from each other in their communities of faith. This led Archbishop Scicluna to re-affirm his proximity to the Maltese people through a daily broadcast of the Mass on national television. Still, the aftermath of the pandemic revealed a simple truth: things are no longer the same.

Scicluna's pastoral and ministerial work can be summarised by the term 'trust.' In his episcopal leadership, but even more so in his global pastoral activity ensuring that justice is administered to victims who have suffered abuse and humiliation, he cultivates a 'culture of truth and trust' until it becomes normative as well as reciprocal and pervasive. This also applies to civil society: countless times he exhorted its leaders and everyone at large to consolidate Malta's rich heritage and values, while embracing change and constant renewal.

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His voice in the local scene pushes for an open, inclusive and dynamic society that puts the common good above egoistic gains, and where trust remains foundational for oneself, others, and the institutions. Where such trust flourishes, no space is left for suspicion, selfishness or even the possibility of a ‘throw-away society.’ Truth about trust becomes a freedom to live that trust. In this sense, Scicluna adamantly advocates for the promise and power of trust that is earned whilst many follow a common journey, within the Church, in ecumenical circles, in interfaith fora, and within society at large. His imprint bears witness to the fostering of a responsible joint care for ‘our common home,’ very much in line with Pope Francis’s vision. What follows is a brief excursus on three key views that Scicluna deems important for a Church sharing its Good News to an alienated society: to share the beauty of faith; to experience God’s mercy and love, and to rediscover the joy of the Good News. One might even see these as Archbishop Scicluna’s wake-up calls to Maltese society.

The precariousness of faith

In the various volumes of *Kelma ta’ Habib*, one encounters a bishop whose main task is to enkindle the faith in his listeners. Faith must never be presupposed, but proposed. It is not automatically passed on to the human heart, but must always be proclaimed. Inspired by Saint Paul’s letters, Scicluna often speaks of a ‘challenged faith’ or of the ‘good fight’ to be faced in the coming times. He refers to the letter to the Ephesians where Paul writes ‘stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness ... take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’² In this sense, to Scicluna, Christians dwell in a place as a foreign land and the handing down of the faith proves to be no easy feat. Throughout his speeches and homilies in fact, one can identify various concerns with regard to the profession and celebration of the Christian faith.

First, there is the *lack of faith*. It often happens that Christians are more concerned with the social, cultural, and political consequences of their commitments, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. Moreover, difficult moments including economic and personal hardships, natural disasters and experienced injustices most

² Ephesians 6:14-17.

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certainly shake people's faith. Scicluna explains that in view of such tough realities, Christians are to turn to God with a prayer: 'Increase faith in us.'³ Many a time, he refers to a weak faith that is synonymous with human vulnerability. He explains that it is through God's mercy that humans find grace, and that the Church, on her part, should not get discouraged of being the sacrament of salvation. Archbishop Scicluna writes:

In every era, the Church resembles a sinking boat, at every moment of history, we will be tempted to think, that 'yes, truly, now the powers of hell are too powerful' and then Jesus' word resonates along the centuries, strong and powerful, firm, and faithful: 'The powers of hell will not defeat it.' And because she has this immunity, for she is steadfast in Christ, she also has the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and all that she binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and all that she loosens on earth will be loosened in heaven.⁴

Secondly, there is *loss or cancellation of memory*. He explains that the younger generation ought to speak habitually to their grandparents about the faith: 'We must discover the roots of our faith, but the true roots, not just the traditions with which we mark time, age, life, and death.' Scicluna affirms that it is our duty to discover who we are and to say: 'We exist, we have a memory, we have a history.' The idea, he argues, is to remember who we are and remember where we came from. He continues that this involves speaking to our hearts.⁵ He explains that the Christian faith is not an individual one, but a communitarian one, through which people gather in Jesus's name. What is personal is one's effort to believe, what is called the 'act of faith.'

Thirdly, there is the *danger of our faith becoming fossilised*. Scicluna explains that our task is to 'deepen the faith.' He refers to the question that Jesus posed in the Gospel: 'When the son of Man comes to earth, will he find faith?'⁶ It is one of the questions Jesus chose not to answer. Scicluna asserts that the answer depends on us, the listeners of the Word, because faith does not impose itself on anybody. There has to be both personal and communal commitment. Seeing that this demand comes from the Heart of Jesus, then certainly, one ought to reply 'Lord, I believe.'⁷ Scicluna writes:

³ Charles J. Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib. Id-Diskorsi ta' Monsinjur Arcisqof Charles J. Scicluna fis-snin 2015-2016*, ed. Charmaine Attard (Malta: Progress Press, 2016), 512.

⁴ Ibid., 343.

⁵ Ibid., 423-424.

⁶ Lk 18:8.

⁷ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 539.

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In our environments, we are urged to provide answers to our children and youth. The hardest thing is how to pass on the faith and not to force belief in others. I admire Pope Francis' choice of words: instead of 'forcing the faith onto you,' he uses 'to pass the faith on.' ... 'Faith is not taught, it is caused.' Faith is then handed down and not downright forced onto someone ... Lead by example, with prayers – 'Let us pray together.' If someone doesn't wish to pray the rosary, then choose some other prayer. No big deal. Handing down the faith is not easy; nevertheless, it is an important mission in the education of children.⁸

Fourthly, there is *alienation*. Faith is a gift, but it requires a spirit of trust in the Lord. The beautiful prayer of that father who suffers because he sees his son suffer: 'I believe, but help me in my lack of faith.'⁹ A gift Christians beg from the Lord is that of faith so that in the circumstances of life they may see the Lord's hand that is often unrecognizable, but always leading to trust and love.¹⁰ He continues that faith does not resemble someone who simply looks on, but one who experiences and lives the faith that is celebrated during liturgical moments.

Lastly, one of the challenges that Christians experience nowadays is the reality that it is no longer possible to make a clear distinction between *belief and unbelief in their lives*. Both belief and unbelief are present as conflicting sources or elements in a person's life and can never be entirely isolated from each other. Unbelief is not something that simply affects the believer *from outside* whether as a temptation to his or her own belief or as a problem in the unbelief of others. It is present to a believer as an immanent element *within* his or her own life of faith. One may realise that while belief and unbelief are distinct, nonetheless they are inseparable and stand together in crucial convergence. Moreover, while one speaks of the *implicit belief* of the unbeliever, so one must speak of the *implicit unbelief* of the believer. These two dimensions do not only complement one another but they also lead to a *sincere dialogue* between those who call themselves 'believers' and those who disclaim adherence to any religious faith. Whatever one's progress in wisdom and spiritual maturity, Scicluna insists on God's benevolence and mercy by which human nature is elevated to a superior level.

⁸ Ibid., 589.

⁹ Mk 9:24.

¹⁰ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 263.

A time of mercy

The emphasis that Archbishop Scicluna places in his homilies on the richness of God's mercy toward human beings is impressive to say the least. There are two words that are synonymous according to the teachings of St Paul. These are *grace* and *mercy*, two sides of the same coin. Scicluna explains that God never gives up on people, whatever their fragility and vulnerability.¹¹ In this sense, there is the mercy that people receive from God, and the mercy that people share among themselves by forgiving those who have failed them, by having words of respect for one another, words of kindness, words of forgiveness, and never of hatred, aggression or violence.¹² Mercy is to be shown toward everyone. Scicluna explains that we need to rediscover that compass which gives a clear moral ethical direction, which is the foundation of a social life in peace and justice between us.¹³ Here, reference can be made to Pope Francis' words which Scicluna refers to and follows closely:

This is the time of mercy. Each day of our journey is marked by God's presence. He guides our steps with the power of the grace that the Spirit pours into our hearts to make them capable of loving. It is the time of mercy for each and all, since no one can think that he or she is cut off from God's closeness and the power of his tender love. It is the time of mercy because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need. It is the time of mercy because the poor should feel that they are regarded with respect and concern by others who have overcome indifference and discovered what is essential in life. It is the time of mercy because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father.¹⁴

In embracing God's tenderness, Scicluna writes that one would learn to use mercy, defend the weak and work towards a spirit of support among all.¹⁵ Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church, since it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. On a particular occasion, he spoke of 'an ocean of mercy between God and humanity.' Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father. What follows are five statements that one can draw from Scicluna's homilies on mercy.

¹¹ Tit 3:5. Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 77.

¹² Cf. Ibid., 35.

¹³ Cf. Ibid., 34.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter on Mercy and Peace *Misericordia et misera*, 21.

¹⁵ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 21.

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First, *mercy is an expression of God's love*. Taking his cue from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Scicluna states that God is rich in mercy; and that this quality is one that most brings forth God's endless power.¹⁶ At the heart of the Gospel is God's mercy. Jesus Christ shows the whole merciful face of the Father: by his word, by his gestures, by all that he is.¹⁷ The Gospel shows us that everyone who meets Jesus can feel the balm of God's great mercy which is a source of immense joy. Playing on words 'ħali' (prodigal) u 'għani' (rich) in Maltese, Scicluna explains that God is 'overgenerous' and 'rich' in mercy.¹⁸ The Lord of mercy looks to the heart as he has come to save and heal all.¹⁹

Secondly, *mercy is an expression of the love we share with our brothers and sisters*. Scicluna gives various examples of overcoming conflicts, hatred, jealousy, the words of judgment on each other and embracing God's mercy and love. The experience of mercy, he adds, is lived in the first place in our families: forgiveness and mercy between spouses, forgiveness and mercy between parents and children, forgiveness and mercy with extended families. What is required is to take the first step towards approaching each other in a spirit of forgiveness and goodwill so that there will be a much brighter and better world.²⁰

Thirdly, *mercy is a concrete expression to protect the weakest and most vulnerable beings*. Scicluna explains that there needs to be protection from all that threatens life and freedom. He says that protection should be given from the beginning of life to its natural end. The Law, he says, should always ensure care and protection from the beginning till the end of human existence because it must also be an expression of mercy that human life is safeguarded through generations. Moreover, the most vulnerable need greater protection. He says that 'the sick are not a burden, the sick are human beings who have a right to care, respect and dignity.'²¹

Fourthly, *mercy is a concrete expression to protect creation*. Scicluna explains that in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis chose the word 'creation' for 'environment' in a purposeful way to remind everyone that

¹⁶ Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy *Misericordiae Vultus* (11 April 2015), 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 451.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

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whatever surrounds us comes in fact from God the Creator. Scicluna writes that everyone needs to protect the beauty that God created and praise him just as Saint Francis did: ‘May you be blessed for our sister the sun; may you be blessed for our brother the moon.’ Undoubtedly, this involves a great responsibility to take care of this ‘common home of ours, and sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.’

Lastly, *mercy is a concrete expression to forgive enemies and welcome the stranger*. Taking his cue from the words of the psalmist, Archbishop Scicluna explains that God’s mercy is able to free everyone from what kills the soul,²² from the true enemy who immerses us in wrath, revenge, and from the hatred of brothers and sisters. He continues by saying that Christ on the Cross is a clear expression of mercy and forgiveness of enemies. In the face of violence, injustices, and terrorism, through God’s mercy, people resist the temptation to respond violently and choose to win hearts through exemplary love. Moreover, mercy leads to welcoming the stranger. Scicluna argues that just as Maltese families found a future in foreign lands, may persons from other lands who come among us, whatever the colour of their skin, always find welcome and respect. This ultimately fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus and leads people to rejoice with all their hearts.

Rediscovering the joy of the Good News

Another invitation that Archbishop Scicluna makes to Maltese society is to listen deeply to God’s Word, follow it, and experience the joy of the Gospel. This idea has practically characterised Pope Francis’s pontificate as well as Scicluna’s episcopate. Joy comes from within. It is a state of being. It does not depend on circumstances, but triumphs over circumstances. It produces a gentleness of spirit. Scicluna explains that Christians ‘rejoice in happiness and rejoice with all their heart’ due to their conviction that God is not just a matter of feelings, but it is He who leads to true freedom that people experience every day. Joy, he continues, comes from the fact that although people are confronted by weakness and sin, the Christian faith assures them of hope, redemption, freedom, and salvation. Joy comes from the certitude that there is God who is a Saviour.²³ Here follow five simple ideas that Scicluna shares in his reflections in this regard.

²² Mt 10:38.

²³ Charles J. Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib. Id-Diskorsi ta’ Monsinjur Arcisqof Charles J. Scicluna fis-Sena Liturgika Dicembru 2018 - Novembru 2019*, ed. Kevin Papagiorcopulo (Malta: Progress Press, 2021), 24.

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First, the door to true happiness in human lives is the Good News. Scicluna refers to the ‘great treasure of the Word of God’ – not of man – but the Word of God. This is the Word of the Lord, of the Lord Jesus.²⁴ Scicluna speaks of an attitude that suits the Christian and that is the belief that from listening comes joy. The Gospel does not speak of individualistic happiness. Rather the neighbours get together and rejoice together the *gaudium magnum*,²⁵ just as Elizabeth rejoiced with Mary. He explains that joy is ultimately an invitation for all to unite and admire the mercy that God continuously shows in the world.²⁶

Secondly, Jesus and the Holy Spirit lead to joy. Scicluna holds that where Jesus is, there is life that overcomes death, grace that frees from sin, and hope that lifts from grief. He gives forgiveness that binds up the broken and joy that banishes sadness.²⁷ This is a joy that comes from the Father through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Scicluna explains that while the early disciples faced all kinds of persecution, nonetheless they were ‘filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.’²⁸ Joy is not some artificial element, but it springs from a sincere life in God. Scicluna continues with a famous Pauline maxim: ‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.’²⁹

Thirdly, hope brings forth joy. Although life may at times prove difficult and people go through a roller coaster of emotions, moments of joy may be complemented with moments of anxiety, ecstasy, and of love. In such cases, Scicluna exhorts his flock to pray. He says: ‘love by respecting each other’s dignity; always love each other with pure love but offer the incense of your prayers to the Lord and do not forget that every breath of your life, if it is a breath of love, is a prayer to God.’³⁰ We are a community of faith; there is a need for hope to bring us this joy that we are recalling, understanding that we are one Church, a communion of saints with our brothers who left before us but at the same time also in a communion of saints who

²⁴ Charles J. Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib. Id-Diskorsi ta’ Monsinjur Arcisqof Charles J. Scicluna fis-Sena Liturgika Dicembru 2017 - Novembru 2018*, ed. Kevin Papagiorcopulo (Malta: Progress Press, 2019), 157.

²⁵ Lk 2:10-11.

²⁶ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2018-2019*, 300.

²⁷ Ibid., 158.

²⁸ Acts 13:52.

²⁹ 1 Thess 5:16-24. Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2017-2018*, 21.

³⁰ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2018-2019*, 84.

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are trying to live a life of hope, a life of faith, and a life of love on this earth.³¹

Fourthly, happiness comes from gratitude. Joy comes from the spirit of praise and from gratitude. How wonderful it would be if apart from the value of silence and the value of fidelity, people rediscover within themselves and in their families the value of gratitude. He says that may we say ‘thank you’ to each other, of the fact that you are present for each other at every moment, of the patience you show towards each other, of the fact that each finds the other at every moment. How much we need to stop and say ‘thank you’!³²

Lastly, Mary leads us to joy in the Lord. Scicluna encourages all to pray to Our Lady to instil in our hearts the comfort, joy and peace of the one who knows that God cares for him and loves him because there are many people who in life seem to feel that no one loves them. He continues let us remind each other that God has mercy on us and loves us, and that his mother, as we say in the *Salve Regina*, is a mother of mercy. We pray to the Lord to free us from all the slavery that hinders us so that we can have the true joy of those who have tasted the freedom that he brought us.³³ By way of concluding this first part, Scicluna’s ministry can be seen as a concrete response to an alienated society in an honest quest for truth. He urges Christians to stand firm in *faith*; to profit from God’s *mercy*; and to *rejoice* with all one’s heart. This leads us to another favourite theme in Archbishop’s Scicluna’s legacy of gentleness: that of respectful service.

Service to the people

When Archbishop Scicluna speaks of service to the people, he always has in mind every single citizen. For this reason, Scicluna refers to both the right disposition of the Church as well as the assurance of society’s wellbeing by the state itself. In this sense, the Church and the state emerge as two key-players in providing the best care and service to the people in general. On one occasion, he said: ‘We are servants of society, by which I mean that I find joy when I see exemplary *cooperation between the State and the Church*, between the Parish and the Local Council. I wish and pray that the people feel truly in social peace and that they

³¹ Ibid., 27.

³² Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2017-2018*, 22.

³³ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2018-2019*, 345.

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are enjoying life.³⁴ True service and the duty to be of service to the civic community often characterise Scicluna's speeches. I would like to highlight a few related ideas.³⁵

First, there is the *respect for the autonomy and sovereignty of the State*. Archbishop Scicluna holds that everyone, including Christians, have a duty to respect the autonomy and sovereignty of the State in the areas in which the Constitution assures each citizen. Additionally, the Church feels that since she is serving the same people, it is her duty to cooperate with the State and the Government that the people have chosen. He explains that just as political stability is essential, so is economic progress, the result of the Government's vision.³⁶ In every public occasion, Scicluna never misses an opportunity to thank the State for having given, within its own autonomy, having given very beautiful examples of cooperation in Malta. It has become a tradition thanks to a lot of good will as well as the wisdom to grow in solidarity.

Secondly, there is a *willingness for collaboration between Church and State*. A working relationship and a continuous cooperation between Church and the State, is indeed a value that must be appreciated and made public. A person of dialogue, of humility and of wisdom in this regard is certainly Archbishop Joseph Mercieca (1928–2016; Archbishop of Malta from 1976–2006). Scicluna indicates Mercieca as a person of dialogue whose spirit of reconciliation, dialogue and reason that needs neither force nor violence, continue to be the basis of a good relationship that must always exist between the Church and the State, so that Maltese society, which is a pluralistic society, can at the same time appreciate and hear the voice of the Church in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation.³⁷ On one occasion, he said: 'We reiterate our commitment to continue working for the benefit of all members of society ... Through our parishes and religious orders we are present throughout the country in a capillary manner. We greatly appreciate the support we have from the State.'³⁸

Thirdly, service depends on *peaceful dialogue* between the main stakeholders. Scicluna explains that rather than arrogant dialogue, service in society depends on a peaceful debate. He says that Christians

³⁴ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 358.

³⁵ Ibid., 198.

³⁶ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 39.

³⁷ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 143.

³⁸ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2017-2018*, 44.

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and the Church *per se* should strive to be a voice without being arrogant or condescending, a voice that engages in dialogue. While the Church has no state authority, it seeks to be of service to the community at large. Collaboration with the State is precious to the Church, because while it thrives in this world, it seeks to be ‘the salt of the earth and the light of the world’, a presence that sometimes stimulates, encourages, comforts, and promotes all that is good.³⁹

Lastly, there is the *politics of tenderness and kindness*. Scicluna explains that this kind of politics ensures a ‘social and political order whose soul is social charity.’ He continues that the Church, in line with the papal encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, encourages and promotes politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis.’ In a tribute to the Pope’s message to the Maltese nation in April 2022, Scicluna reminds of the need to ‘shore up the foundations of life in society, which rests on law and legality’ and said honesty, justice and transparency were essential pillars of a mature civil society.’ Scicluna also called on Members of Parliament to ponder their legacy, calling on them to reflect not merely on whether they enjoyed the support of their constituents, but rather on what they did for the progress of the people.⁴⁰ In this light, if politics is seen in terms of service, then it is certainly more noble than simply posturing, window dressing, or media spin. This brings us to our second point in this section, that is governance. In Scicluna’s opinion, to move away from division, conflict or a bleak cynicism, society needs good leadership.

Good governance

Quoting Francis, Scicluna explains that society needs courageous women and men who are ready not simply to assist, but to perform acts of charity that possibly change people’s social conditions in the first place. In this section, we would like to briefly dwell on good governance as respectable service to the people. In particular, reference shall be made to an exceptional Homily to four transcendental values during a Mass on Independence Day which Scicluna presents as criteria for good governance.⁴¹ These include the *unum* (the one or unique), the *bonum* (good), the *verum* (the true) and

³⁹ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2015-2016*, 198-199.

⁴⁰ https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/116648/archbishop_to_mps_inspire_progress_for_people_not_posturing_and_media_spin#.Yuz6_-xBy3I (accessed on 7 April 2022).

⁴¹ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2015-2016*, 492-495.

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the *pulchrum* (the beautiful).⁴² What follows is his reflections inspired by these four values as well as a reference to the art of stewardship.

Scicluna starts with *unity* and explains that good governance is based on the unity of the people. The state government should be first and foremost built on seeking national unity. He explains that a governance that separates or is built on the privilege of the few is a betrayal and poison to the common good of society. Every citizen, under the rule of law as an expression of the common good, has the right to share the whole purpose of the State and to benefit from government services. He continues that good governance seeks to eliminate unfair discrimination while engaging in a perpetual determination for national unity.

The second transcendental value is *goodness* as an expression of *bonum* (good). Archbishop Scicluna explains that political systems that expect to be able to override human moral exigencies end up ridiculing the state government, rendering it into a monstrous caricature of itself. He holds that when the common good is sacrificed at the altar of the selfishness of the few, then it could be said that the State is sick. He continues that the State should pluck up the courage to properly suppress the greed of the few whose sole intention is to thicken their pockets at the expense of the many. In this light, reason teaches us to seek good and avoid evil for that is the foundation of an authentic human life.

The third transcendental value is the *truth*. Good governance is determined only when discourse is grounded in truth. Archbishop Scicluna says that while there is a solid relationship between truth and similar values namely equity, right judgment, and justice, nonetheless everything rests on what is real and true. He continues that the state and its people should be aware of the primordial instinct present in everyone, that is to rely on true facts. Governance built on distorting the truth, on obscure agreements and on the rejection of public scrutiny, can never be considered good governance. Alternatively, transparency and accountability in governance are values that make the Maltese a people who are truly proud of their Government.

The fourth and final transcendental value is *beauty* as an expression of the *pulchrum* (what is beautiful). Archbishop Scicluna says that while

⁴² The concept of beautiful has three categories: aesthetic, moral and functional. The functional implies that it is 'good' according to what it was created for, thus functional.

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the relationship between good governance and beauty may still need to be developed in political science, nonetheless one may speak of the *sapientia cordis* that is the wisdom of the heart. He explains that this expression brings together an element of truth (wisdom) and an element of goodness (the heart). In this sense, governance based on truth and goodness as vehicles to the wisdom of the heart forces everyone to bring forward and protect the beauty of art, architecture, and the environment. He asks: do we not think that the uglification of our natural and historical heritage is a clear sign of a lack of wisdom of the heart? He continues that a Government that enthusiastically defends the purity of our seas and allows only sustainable development is a Government that has at heart the beauty, expressing the wisdom of the heart of the nation, the beautiful acumen of this Sweet Land.

Lastly, governance needs to be perceived as the art of stewardship of the State at both the national and the international level. Archbishop Scicluna explains that since the steward is entrusted with the wellbeing of a household that is not his property, he or she must ensure to be its servant and not its abuser. One is called to dedicate one's life for the good of others and will shun any temptation to abuse one's authority for personal gain, profit, or advantage. In order to fulfil this calling to the best of one's abilities, one needs a healthy sense of detachment, internal or psychological freedom, and the humility to face adversity and failure when things do not go according to plan, or where tough decisions taken in good conscience come at a heavy political price. In this light, through checks and balances parliament ensures good governance as well as the upkeep of ethics in authority.⁴³ Governance in terms of stewardship refers to servanthood that guarantees and promotes the order, stability, and consequent peace of the household or home.⁴⁴ Stewardship should be embraced as a way of governance, a way of life.⁴⁵

Values and humanity

As one reads Scicluna, one realises that a third element that he deems foundational for a true service to the people is the *consolidation*

⁴³ Message of the Archbishop to the Speaker of the House of Representatives at the exchange of wishes for Christmas and the New Year in the Palace of the Archbishop, Valletta, 19 December 2019.

⁴⁴ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 392.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 395.

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of values. Unless a society understands the importance of values and the grandeur of human life, a principled service to the people is not possible. During his years in episcopacy, Scicluna explained that values ensure a humanised society. He says that behind the mask of every person, especially in the suffering, there is a human being who thirsts for love, solidarity, compassion and mercy at its true heart.⁴⁶ Here are some of his insights with regard to the different values that enrich humanity.

First of all, there is the *value of life*. Scicluna calls for the need to ‘shore up the foundations of life in society, which rests on law and legality.’ There is value of life even when it is not seen.⁴⁷ He says: ‘Life has value even when it doesn’t seem to have value. Without condemning anyone, and without wishing to break anyone’s heart, we need to pray for light even on those who lead us, so that this voice of freedom that says: ‘I am the master of life, choose life not the death’, enters the depths of our heart and soul and He will be the light that guides us in our decisions.’ He iterates and says: ‘Do not give up on being a beautiful presence of Christians in the context in which we are. It is not a moment to run away from debates, from conversations and to be afraid to say who you are or what your values are.’⁴⁸

Secondly, there is *common good*. On this theme the Archbishop says that the Church understands that part of the common good is religious freedom, which people enjoy and for which they would like to thank the State. He explains that although there are times when the State and the Church are not always in agreement, Christians understand that they have freedom to live and lead others by their ethos. Scicluna praises the Constitution for enabling people, particularly Christians, to live up and serve their mission in public.⁴⁹

Thirdly, there is *solidarity*. Archbishop Scicluna explains that more than ever before, people today need the prophetic voice of solidarity: solidarity between different states and between nations; solidarity in the state’s internal social policy; and intergenerational solidarity, meaning solidarity between generations.⁵⁰ He explains that although people

⁴⁶ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2015-2016*, 12.

⁴⁷ Homily during Mass on the occasion of Life Day – St John’s Co-cathedral, Valletta, 14 February 2016.

⁴⁸ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2015-2016*, 138.

⁴⁹ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2017-2018*, 45.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 534.

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might be tempted to give more value to the individual, solidarity has always been an essential value in the life of Maltese society. This is evidenced by both the social policy that the Maltese State has embraced since before Independence and which has continued to be carried out by all governments till today

Fourthly, there is *respect*. We are committed to first of all the creation of best practices for the media which then gives everyone the opportunity to express themselves; but there must also be the limits of decency when we comment on each other, especially on the person. Scicluna insists that 'this is something that we have to work on and I feel that it is urgent, because otherwise we will create social tension that we do not need. And although it is often artificial, it creates unnecessary tension even in those who are carrying the burden of responsibility and do not need to be ridiculed or otherwise slandered. I feel that we, who are in authority, must be subject to the people's scrutiny because we want to serve the people but there is no need to be ridiculed while being scrutinized.'⁵¹

Lastly, there is the value of *compassion*. Scicluna explains that the health of a society is manifested when talk about solidarity is transformed into a rolling up of sleeves and doing something.⁵² He explains that true service is given when the State and other entities, including the Church, invest in the younger generation and help them to aspire. Speaking about young people who might have fallen into the destructive cycle of substance abuse, Scicluna states that rather than being judgemental in their regard, or expressing condemnation, or having metaphorical stones thrown at them, they should find true help, understanding and compassion. Scicluna praises the State for not only showing confidence in the Church in her ministry with such youths, but also for providing helpful resources. Trauma or dependence upon any substance or other destructive habits can be transformed through compassion and empowerment. Scicluna is emphatic about exercising mercy towards each other. He writes:

Show mercy among yourselves. When you hurt each other, don't be quick to sever relationships in a hurry, because that's easy to do. See that when it rains and thunders between you, you make a commitment - this is advice that Pope Francis likes to repeat - to try to make peace before going to sleep. Don't let the rancour, the hurts, continue to fester in you. Be humble enough to talk about the things that bother you.⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid., 45.

⁵² Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 253.

⁵³ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 19.

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True Service to people ultimately rests on understanding clearly the nature of being human. Service is not rendered for service's sake, but rather in view of making humanity better. In plain language, Scicluna explains that 'we are all human beings. We need to learn to sit together and know each other, eat together and listen to good music because this is peace on earth.'⁵⁴ He comments:

Open and leave your doors open wide for the love of Jesus. When this occurs within you, your faith ceases to be an individual experience, and the very joy of the love you have received as a result will lead you to engage in every area of life. The joy of love itself leads you to share it with other human beings in the life of the Church, in engagement in civil society, in the political and economic fields. Jesus loves you so that you will have the strength to love; he gives you joy so that you may comfort and cheer others; Jesus accompanies you at all times so that you may stand with the one who grieves, comforting him and helping him to stand and walk. You receive mercy to become merciful.⁵⁵

God matters

Taking the plunge to live up to the Christian calling is our final point of reflection. The issue of *credibility* in one's life, particularly in Christian life, takes centre stage in the thought of Archbishop Scicluna as he sees its correlation with *freedom*. Very much in line with the thought of Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa, who taught that Christians are made, not born.⁵⁶ Christian life, contrary to inertia, Scicluna explains, is always a starting over, from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that never end. Christians are 'people of the Way,'⁵⁷ women and men on a journey, following Jesus who says of himself 'I am the way, the truth and the life.'⁵⁸ Seeking authenticity leads to personal growth and a liberating freedom. Scicluna continues that Christians are recognised by their deeds and it would be scandalous if the prophet's words 'where is their God?' are expressed about Christians today.⁵⁹ On one occasion, he even asked whether people take God seriously enough.⁶⁰

What is needed nowadays is precisely a renewed impulse and the courage of perseverance. Scicluna exhorts people to respond dutifully

⁵⁴ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 283.

⁵⁵ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 305-306.

⁵⁶ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, XVIII, 4; Gregory of Nissa, *Homiliae in Canticum*, 8.

⁵⁷ Acts 9:2.

⁵⁸ Jn 14:6.

⁵⁹ Joel 2:17.

⁶⁰ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 106-107.

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to an observation by St George Preca that for many people, God is a 'big zero.' If credibility must take centre stage, then it requires faith to take shape. Credibility happens within an active faith. It is the active recognition of true love. What is credible then is genuine Christian love that perfects itself through a journey. Freedom stems from this commitment. This section includes three examples of a journey by which Christians come across as being authentic, free, and true to their calling by passing from a Christianity of belonging to a Christianity of experience; passing from a superficial religiosity to becoming friends of the Gospel; and by putting faith before belief. In a nutshell, living life in a Christian way is all about experiencing freedom.

From a Christianity of belonging to a Christianity of experience

The first kind of freedom that Scicluna exhorts for Christians in Malta concerns one's commitment to God through religious experience. Although he does not use a binary framework along the lines of Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*), Erich Fromm (*Escape from Freedom*), Isaiah Berlin (*Four Essays On Liberty*) and more recently Charles Taylor,⁶¹ it becomes evident that he presses for a transition from a Christianity of belonging, relying mainly on tradition to a Christianity of experience. Christianity of belonging on the one hand risks having persons calling themselves Christian without actually believing; while on the other hand, Christianity of experience points to a living relationship with Christ. The supreme value of Christianity lies in Christ being the path of a new life, a living foundation.

Scicluna explains that what is necessary today is not simply the affirmation of Christianity as belonging, but to lead a lifestyle that embodies the Word of the Gospel today. The vocation of Christianity is not to preserve the Gospel, but to transmit it in a creative way that appeals to everyone and to transmit the sense of living life as Christ promised. In a certain sense there is an urgency of a Christianity as an experience of life authentically lived, as an experience of living life. It is to be seized by Jesus Christ,⁶² by God himself. It would be a pity if some had to ignore God's presence and grace. Scicluna says:

Together with Mary and Joseph, when we look at the baby Jesus we would like to tell him these words that the saints taught us. The first thing we tell him is

⁶¹ Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in Idem, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), II: 211-229.

⁶² Phil 3:12.

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a prayer that Saint George Preca taught us. Let us look at Jesus lying in the manger of Bethlehem and say to him, 'God almighty, I need you.' We often live our lives as if God does not exist or as if we do not need his mercy; as if we don't need his help because now we know and understand everything.⁶³

Freedom comes from becoming friends of the Gospel. Scicluna exhorts his flock 'let the Word build you.' He explains that before preaching the Word, one must be friends of the Word. If in Jesus we find someone who truly loves, then let His voice be the voice of love. Inspired by Saint George Preca, Scicluna insists on Christians becoming friends of the Gospel. In other words, becoming a friend of the Gospel is to listen the voice of the Beloved.⁶⁴ In this light, the Word of God will build, shape, and consecrate its listener. He says:

We need to evangelise the young by making them conscious that they are part of a Catholic family, a large family. There are children who have all sorts of needs, but they are part of one family: a family of believers who believe in Jesus, and there are so many others. We have this thirst for Jesus that they can help to quench and also grow in the missionary spirit.⁶⁵

Scicluna explains that while it is right to rejoice in society's progress in science, technology, economics, and wealth which are all blessings, people should not neglect to keep on telling God: 'We need you.'⁶⁶ Living as Christians means doing God's will along the example of Our Lady: 'Let it be done unto me according to your word.'⁶⁷ It also involves renewing the promises of baptism in order to be confirmed in the faith of the Church. Scicluna encourages his listeners to follow Christ's example to forgive those have trespassed against us and henceforth receive God's blessing granting mercy, forgiveness, and peace.⁶⁸ This leads us to another example of embarking on a journey to freedom.

From a superficial religiosity to preaching the Gospel

Building boldness in sharing the Gospel is another step that leads to freedom. This certainly requires a *metanoia*, a change of heart, a pastoral conversion that leads to a living relationship with God.

⁶³ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 80.

⁶⁴ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2017-2018*, 158.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 298.

⁶⁶ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 80.

⁶⁷ Lk 1:38.

⁶⁸ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 80-81.

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Scicluna explains that while Christianity still beats in Maltese hearts, nonetheless they are invited to live up to the Christian calling. The challenge is to pass from a superficial religiosity to bearing witness to the Gospel and the power of God. Instead of being a 'guilty bystander' as Thomas Merton would describe it, Christians are asked to be active harbingers of good news and of peace.

A term that sums up the spirit with which Scicluna exhorts the flock is *parrhesia*, that is, to preach with courage and frankness. It is not enough to translate the Christian message into the language of today's men and women. The Christian message is 'an event of the word that must be said with *parrhesia*, and each one is personally summoned by a word that motivates to speak, not to echo, but to announce the message. Instead of speaking of the Gospel, Christians should imperatively make the Gospel speak through their lives. Naturally, they will be able to do so only if the Gospel becomes like an inextinguishable inner fire very much in the spirit of the prophet Jeremiah.⁶⁹

Christian language is 'significant' if it enters into a relationship with someone's life. While the content of faith is true and liberating in itself, it becomes even more meaningful when related to human lives. The Word of the Gospel is meaningful and truthful when, addressed to the listener, it gives one's life an orientation and a style inspired by the Gospel, avoiding the tendency to rattle off abstract platitudes. The language of *parrhesia* vivifies and inspires hope. The Word of the Gospel is spoken and witnessed with *parrhesia* if it is 'significant' and 'truthful.'

Scicluna explains that the Maltese identity does not simply rely on history or tradition, but even more so on the effort that brings together lives and experiences enlightened by the Word. Throughout their illustrious history, the Maltese have earned respect around the world as a hospitable people. Maltese welcome millions of visitors every year and takes pride in showing them local heritage and culture. He explains that the Maltese welcomed the Apostle Paul when he was shipwrecked on their shores 2,000 years ago and were gifted with the greatest gift he could have bestowed upon them: the Christian faith.⁷⁰

A journey that liberates is one where the power of the Word works on people's lives. What counts is not simply the external forms of

⁶⁹ Jer 20:9 'his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.'

⁷⁰ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 442.

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religiosity with its sentimental aspects. *Parrhesia* in this sense involves the faith permeating the public space, the media, politics and even the economy. Christian faith is not some sugar-coated proposition, but an invitation to true life, happiness, and freedom. Scicluna reminds his followers: Do not expect that everyone who listens to you will applaud you, but you, as the prophet says and as God says to the Prophet Jeremiah: ‘Do not say ‘I am still young.’ You go wherever I send you, and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, because I am with you to deliver you.’⁷¹

As trends continue to change the world and society we live in, Christians have a duty to examine whether they are living the faith through their words and deeds. This inevitably entails the unequivocal rejection of ideologies or remarks that seek to sow feelings of hatred and discrimination purely on the basis of race or culture – whether they occur at the local greengrocer or through widely-populated social media channels.⁷² It is this very faith that endows us with the morals and values that form the backbone of what the Maltese are as a nation. Its people are the Church with the Gospel. Faith is not a negotiable commodity. He explains that locals should not provide visitors with a warm welcome only when they extend their hand to place a euro in our pocket.⁷³ The Gospel helps us to live in a just, fraternal, and liberating way.

Faith before belief

A third step that leads to freedom requires that faith be given precedence over belief. Scicluna explains that putting faith before belief is of decisive importance because the vitality of Christianity is measured by a pastoral conversion, a change it confers on all life. ‘Not whoever says to me: Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven’ (Mt 7:21). What sets us free is not some more or less convinced theoretical opinion, but a living relationship with God. For belief, God is an idea; for faith God is Life that calls humans to become whole. The primacy of faith can be explained in the following assertions.

Faith comes from hearing and from hearing the word of Christ.⁷⁴ Archbishop Scicluna explains that rather than from a direct encounter

⁷¹ Jer 1:7-8. Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2017-2018*, 157.

⁷² Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2018-2019*, 443.

⁷³ Scicluna, *Kelma ta’ Habib 2018-2019*, 442.

⁷⁴ Rom 10:17.

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with the Lord, the Christian faith rests on active listening to the Word of Christ. The Lord sends his people so that his word can be received: 'Whoever listens to you, hears me.'⁷⁵ In such manner, faith is not based on what people see, but rather on what they have heard. As for the Maltese, they could hear St Paul say: 'I saw him on the street of Damascus and I heard the voice of the Lord.' On their part, they were lucky enough to listen to Paul and to Publius.⁷⁶

The true faith Paul brought to the Maltese. A second element that Archbishop Scicluna emphasizes is the particularity of the faith in Malta. He explains that our Christian way of life should somehow resemble Paul's efforts to live the faith. Paul leads by his example to discern oneself, to celebrate the Eucharist, as well as to live in justice and charity. Scicluna continues that what Paul handed down to us is not merely traditions and folklore to be handed down the generations, but a gift that carries with it great responsibility. He says: 'What are we going to pass on to our children: museums or a living faith?' Similarly, 'The son of Man, when he comes to earth, will he find faith?' What Paul desires for the Maltese is nothing other than a healthy relationship with the living Christ.

A faith that has been passed on to us. Archbishop Scicluna explains that the faith that Christians profess is that which has been passed on from generation to generation. Faith brings everyone together, the living with the communion of saints. Scicluna continues by remarking how deep the faith is when it is celebrated in remembrance of the beloved departed who intercede for everyone before the throne of the Lord's justice and mercy.⁷⁷

Lastly, *faith leads to action.* Scicluna emphasises that the Christians' response cannot be just in words, but also in concrete terms as witnesses of love. Referring to Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Scicluna says people nowadays have less patience to listen, and hence people are moved by example. One who has led by concrete example is certainly Christ who loved until he was taken to the cross. He becomes the criterion of our love. Scicluna insists that Christians are to seek a life-changing encounter with Christ to work for a fairer society and to fight any discrimination based on poverty or greed. One realises that Scicluna's overall effort in pastoral ministry is then nothing other

⁷⁵ Lk 10:16.

⁷⁶ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2017-2018*, 250.

⁷⁷ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 450.

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than living the Gospel which in reality implies honouring the truth, respecting the neighbour through a respectable service, and reaching out for liberating joy.

Conclusion

Archbishop Scicluna's legacy of gentleness has been marked by his prophetic voice in favour of truth, service, and freedom. His has always been the Church's voice in a pluralistic society, where his words were powerful and prophetic. His overall pastoral leadership and guidance can perhaps be summarised in St Paul's own words to the Philippians: 'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.'⁷⁸ Indeed, these words, dear to Archbishop Scicluna, remind all Maltese – and Christians in particular – their special and authentic hallmark: gentleness or kindness.⁷⁹ This implies above all the ability to forgive, to be modest in words, to never be arrogant or aggressive, and to seek to establish peace through God's mercy and tender love. All this resonates well with Archbishop Scicluna's leadership toward a Church that is more holy, inspired by God's word, and certainly a Church of the little ones.

This paper has sought to genuinely understand Scicluna's legacy of gentleness manifested in his quest for *truth*, in his emphasis on *service* and in fostering a spirit of *freedom*. His ministry in the Church and in society is a concrete testimony to love. His effort includes having fostered a sense of love and respect. Many times he has reiterated that while Maltese have strong roots, their greatness lies in embracing a diversity of cultures, languages, races, and religions. There should be no room for prejudice and hatred as these lead to exclusion, destruction, and animosity. Instead, true love leads to the renewal of society.⁸⁰ Scicluna's legacy is precisely a reminder to pluck up one's courage to bear witness to the love that is the language that everyone understands. In this light, love as a gift of God is the foundation of an inclusive society where the fundamental rights of every human being, whoever one is, are respected and safeguarded.

Undoubtedly, Scicluna's gentleness commands respect. His gentleness is one of the most disarming and captivatingly attractive qualities he has. Preserving a gentle spirit in a heartless world takes

⁷⁸ Phil 4:4-5.

⁷⁹ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2015-2016*, 31.

⁸⁰ Scicluna, *Kelma ta' Habib 2018-2019*, 266.

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extraordinary courage, determination, and resilience. Clearly, his leadership can be measured in the power of his word, in his insistence on the steady collaboration between the state and the Church in service to all, as well as in embracing the liberating and joyful journey in faith. Ultimately, one should not underestimate the power of gentleness because the latter is strength enclosed in peace, and therein lies the power to change the world. What better words than Mahatma Gandhi's to summarise Scicluna's legacy: 'In a gentle way, one can shake the world.'