

# **PASTORAL LETTER**

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**Archbishop of Malta**

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**GENERAL ELECTIONS 2013**

## **RESPECT TOWARDS THE TRUTH AND ONE ANOTHER**

The General Elections represent a significant moment in any democratic society. Every citizen should feel duty-bound to participate freely and in a responsible manner: candidates, standing for election, by choosing to be of service for each and every one, the electorate by casting their vote.

While recognizing the autonomy of the State, the Church remains committed to help the citizen form his conscience in freedom, in the name of the common good and in order that the dignity of every person may be safe-guarded. The Church does not assume, nor does it request any privileges. Like every other entity in society, it expects to enjoy the liberty to continue and to promote its pastoral mission, which consists of teaching and performing other works of charity.

In a spirit of respect and collaboration, as Bishops, we wish to draw attention to four aspects of great importance: the family; the younger generation; the poor and those who are suffering; and the environment.

The family, created through marriage - which constitutes an everlasting bond between one man and one woman - should continue to serve as the natural and social environment in which children are born and reared. It would be beneficial if the State, through its institutions, through any laws which are promulgated, through its policies, were to endorse this institution of the family which the majority of the Maltese people still hold dear to their hearts. When the need arises to promulgate laws with respect to different forms of relationships, then the State should safeguard and guarantee the dignity of every individual, without diminishing the essential role of the family as father and mother, together with their children.

The younger generation should continue to benefit from all the services which are necessary for their education and which enhance their work prospects. Every effort should be made to intensify the battle against the drug market, which is so destructive and which ensnares our youth in its nasty trap. On a positive note, one should commend and encourage the many initiatives which provide our youth with the opportunity to undergo a voluntary-work experience both locally and abroad.

The poor and those who suffer are always present. As Bishops, we wish to express our appreciation for all the efforts which are constantly being done in order that poverty may be reduced and suffering alleviated in Maltese society. Every person will be judged by God for the way he looked after the poor and the needy. In the process of economic progress, every endeavour should be made for any resources to be distributed fairly, and for the working conditions to undergo constant improvement.

The environment is an invaluable patrimony and we are duty-bound to care for and safeguard. The Christian should discern God's hand in the work of creation and do everything possible in order that the natural environment is not harmed beyond repair. Every form of progress should be sustainable development and in accordance with the laws of the country.

This is our heartfelt appeal to all citizens so that the electoral campaign may proceed in a spirit of respect towards the truth and towards one another, in order that the people's verdict will be honoured in all honesty and given the assurance it deserves.

We impart upon you our Pastoral Blessing.

Issued today, the 25 of January 2013, Feast of the Conversion of St Paul.

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