



**APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE  
IN MALTA**

**MESSAGE TO THE PARISH DEDICATED TO ST ANDREW THE APOSTLE  
IN LUQA**

The year of Our Lord 2010 has been an important one for the people of Malta and Gozo on account of the 1950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Shipwreck of St Paul and the first evangelization of this land. We were overjoyed to welcome the successor of St Peter, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, among us last April. Moreover, this year which is now approaching its end, marks another important anniversary – the 1950<sup>th</sup> year since the martyrdom of St Andrew. Tradition affirms that Andrew was martyred in the year 60 A.D. which therefore means that in the same year that the Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul, was bearing witness and preaching the Good News to your forefathers, Andrew bore the supreme witness to Christ by shedding his blood for his sake.

After your celebrations, last year, when you commemorated the 375 years since the foundation of your parish in 1634, this year has therefore also been a special one for the Christian community living in Luqa. These two years have been marked by the elevation to the episcopate, in May 2009, of one of the sons of your parish, Archbishop Joseph Spiteri, the Apostolic Nuncio in Sri Lanka. A few months ago, in the days leading to the summer festa in honour of St Andrew, you were happy to welcome Archbishop Spiteri who inaugurated the wonderful paintings which adorn the inside of the dome of your parish church for us to admire.

This year's special anniversary offers us with an opportunity to reflect on the life and mission of the Apostle Andrew, the *Protokletos*, the first to be called by Jesus who was forming the group of the Twelve. We read about the call of Andrew in the Gospel of John (1:40). He was so overcome with joy that he went to share his initial experience of Jesus with his brother Simon. Very often, Andrew is depicted in the Gospels as the apostle who takes other persons to Jesus. He takes the boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus who then makes the miracle which feeds the five thousand (Jn 6:1-13). It is also Andrew who together with Philip goes to tell Jesus about the Greeks who wanted to meet him (Jn 12:20-22). These episodes invite us

to reflect upon our Christian vocation which asks of us *to take others to Jesus and to bear witness to the Gospel.*

I encourage you to take the motto which the parish has chosen for this year very seriously. When, in the narrative according to Matthew, Jesus called Andrew and Peter, and tells them: *“Come after me and I will make you fishers of men”* (Mt 4:19), the Lord is also telling you – priests, religious, and lay persons of all ages – *to take up your Christian commitment with responsibility and dedication.*

A time-honoured tradition states that St Andrew, after several missionary travels, was the leader of the Christian community of Byzantium and its first bishop. According to a longstanding tradition, he was martyred by crucifixion on a *crux decussata* (an X-shaped cross) at Patras, in Greece, in the year 60. Although we have no precise details of this event, we are nonetheless attracted to the strong witness given by the Apostle because of his profound and sincere love for Jesus Christ. Your devotion to St Andrew should be marked with an authentic dedication of yourselves and your families to the Lord. The pilgrimage to Amalfi, last July, of a group of people from your parish led by the parish priest, Fr Carmel Camilleri, was a tangible sign of your love for your patron saint, especially when you venerated his relics in the well-known shrine in that Italian port. On this occasion, I recall the words of the Message which His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI sent, last year, to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomaios I for the feast of St Andrew: *“The memory of the holy martyrs compels all Christians to bear witness to their faith before the world. There is an urgency in this call especially in our own day, in which Christianity is faced with increasingly complex challenges. The witness of Christians will surely be all the more credible if all believers in Christ are ‘of one heart and soul’ (Acts 4:32)”* (25 November 2009).

I wish you a devoted celebration on the feast of St Andrew on the 30<sup>th</sup> November. May this year’s festivities, on the 1950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his martyrdom, fill each one of you, as well as all the parish community, with renewed fervour as you strive to lead a Christian life marked by a spirit of communion, service and witness.

Rabat, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2010



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