



## In the Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

### The Covid-19 Pandemic:

# Church-State Separation, Religious Liberty and a Filial Plea to Malta's Catholic Bishops to Publicly Consecrate Our Country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary

**T**he Maltese Society for Christian Civilisation – Pro Malta Christiana gives thanks to God and Our Lady for the decision finally reached by the Maltese Catholic episcopate to restore the sacraments to the faithful by reopening the churches in Malta and Gozo as from June 14 of this year.

The closure of the churches in our islands, imposed by the bishops on March 12 was the first such ban in over 200 years, following the 1813 bubonic plague.

The way this pandemic has been addressed by the church and the state in Malta enables sober considerations that should be a cause for the reflection of all Maltese and Gozitan Catholics as well as all men of good will.

### Church Services were not considered "Essential"

Neither the socialist government nor – apparently – our church authorities deemed public religious services as essential during this crisis, albeit a relatively short period of private prayer in the churches was permitted daily. For 3 months, the faithful were deprived of the graces bestowed by the sacraments, which, according to Catholic teaching, are **essential for the health of the soul**.

Indeed, the Church has taught that the health of the soul always takes precedence over the health of the body, this being basic Christian doctrine. While "Charity" was invoked as justification for such a decision, it is pertinent to point out that the primary charity the church owes the faithful is to provide access to the sacramental graces that come with reception of the sacraments in times of crisis, especially holy communion.

**With some creative thinking in adapting prudent health-preserving measures in our churches, this drastic situation which Maltese Catholics bore with resignation could have been avoided.**

**Consequently, if the reopening of our churches is now subject to prudential measures such as mandatory social-distancing, temperature monitoring, and the use of sanitizers and face masks, could not these measures have been implemented in our churches during the previous three months? The faithful are legitimately entitled to an answer.**

### The example of the Great Catholic Saint, Cardinal Charles Borromeo

The reaction of large swathes of the Church – Malta included – stands in great contrast to that of St. Charles Borromeo, who was the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan when a plague broke out in that city in 1576. Cardinal Borromeo not only assisted those who fell sick, but also ordered public and private prayers. He visited hospitals and led penitential processions, believing that the plague was a scourge sent by Heaven as a punishment for sins.

When the magistrates who governed Milan objected to the public ceremonies, arguing that they would spread contagion, Borromeo convinced them that spiritual remedies, like those prescribed by Pope St. Gregory the Great in the year 590, had stopped plagues in the past.

### A Free Church in a Free State?

The past 3 months have shown what a mockery has been made of the principle that Malta is a secular state with complete Church-State separation. **This concept, repeated ad nauseam by Maltese politicians in recent years is nothing but a convenient sham to empower the State at the expense of the Church.**

**If such a separation between Church and State truly existed, the Maltese church would have been allowed to adopt her own prudential health measures in all matters over which she has exclusive competence in order to allow the churches to remain open for the faithful to receive the sacraments. The State considered that such a course of action was unacceptable, and our ecclesiastical authorities complied, meekly or otherwise.**

When Malta's Archbishop publicly tweeted last May that the ongoing situation of churches in lockdown ought to be reassessed, the Maltese government, following "consultation" replied that "it was too early" to permit the reopening of the churches.

Naturally, construction activities with non-existent social distancing – deemed "essential" by the state – were permitted by the authorities who placed material considerations above all else. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the secular State ignored Our Lord Jesus Christ's ad-



**US President Donald Trump rightly insisted on keeping churches open during the corona virus pandemic because they provided an essential service to the American nation.**  
Photo Credit: Pete Souza



**Saint Charles Borromeo rebuked the civil authorities for having placed their trust exclusively in human measures rather than divine ones.**

monishment to His disciples:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing... "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6, 25-33). Sadly, our supposedly "free" Church was also found wanting.

Maltese and Gozitan Catholics were thus forced to bow down to an omnipotent government dictating to the church what she could and couldn't do in her supposedly "free" sphere of activities. **This is not only a violation of the Church's right to religious freedom but also of the Catholic principle of Subsidiarity.**

The announced reopening of our churches was also subject to consultation with the local authorities. **The inescapable conclusion is that we live in a country with an omnipotent State and a partially free Church.**

### A Reverent Plea to Our Bishops: Publicly Consecrate our Country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In the wake of the ongoing pandemic, their Excellencies the bishops of Malta and Gozo would do well to place their trust fully in God and in the maternal intercession of Our Lady by a means of a public act of immense spiritual importance in the confusing and perilous times in which we live. On the feast of the Annunciation, March 25 this year, **24 countries** were consecrated by their respective Bishops to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

This consecration was initiated by the Portuguese bishops in response to the corona virus pandemic. Unfortunately, Malta was not among the 24 nations that were consecrated by their respective national Episcopal Conferences. At this difficult hour, we long to hear our bishops publicly utter these words of recitation made by Portugal's Cardinal Antonio Marto in Fatima on March 25, which we have duly adapted to our nation:

**"Heart of Jesus Christ, healer of souls and Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, through the Heart of Your Mother, to whom the pilgrim Church on earth is given, in Malta, a nation which has been Hers for centuries, and in so many other countries, accept the consecration of Your Church".**

The Maltese Society for Christian Civilisation – Pro Malta Christiana reverently entreats the Catholic Episcopate of Malta and Gozo to make a public act of consecration of the Maltese Islands to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in the presence of the faithful.

**The Executive Council of Pro Malta Christiana.**



### **Please tick:**

- ☐ Yes! I endorse your filial plea for the Maltese Catholic Bishops to publicly consecrate the Maltese Islands to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the presence of the faithful.
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