



## **MARIUS GRECH**

**EPISCOPUS GAUDISIENSIS**

### **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MALTESE AND GOZITAN EMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA**

My dear brothers and sisters emigrants,

In a few days time I will start off on my journey to come to you in Australia. Although it will be a long journey as you are far away, I am convinced that the ties that bind us together bring us together and will overcome the physical distances that separate us!

Indeed all that I have learnt about the Maltese and Gozitan emigrants in Australia have helped me nurture in my heart sentiments which normally grow in the context of a family! Although this is my first time that I will be coming to the Australian continent, I feel that I am coming to a large family which embraces several generations of Maltese and Gozitans. I am convinced that your desire to welcome me is as strong as my longing to meet you.

We are bound together by patriotic ties because Maltese blood runs in our veins. I know that you always held the name of our nation high and you have taken care to cultivate our Maltese cultural heritage. I also know that many of you have succeeded to make a good name for yourselves and for our country. Indeed on my last visit to Ms. Anne Quinane, the Australian High Commissioner to Malta, she affirmed that you are a people known for your industry and conscientiousness. I am looking forward to confirm this personally during my visit.

But I am coming amongst you as your brother in the journey of faith following Christ and also as a spiritual pastor. It is no small consolation for me to hear of your love for the patrimony of the faith. This is confirmed by the Maltese and Gozitan priests and religious living amongst you and by some of your Australian Bishops whom I recently met in Madrid where we celebrated World Youth Day.

In this pastoral visit which I will be celebrating amongst you I will let myself be inspired by Paul's sentiments for the people of the city of Corinth: "when I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power"(1 Cor 2, 1 – 5).

I am coming to you in order to know you better, to share with you the satisfaction of the many good things you have, learn from you especially about the experience of faith and the Church you are living, partake of your difficulties in the

different aspects of life, such as religion, solitude, the family, work, inculturation etc. In this visit I am eager and have a strong desire to come to know Australia which has become your second home and which you have enhanced by your substantial contribution; and I want to meet you and your families who are the treasures of your heart. All this I want to undertake as the servant of Jesus Christ. I have a great wish that during these weeks that I am amongst you, I am an instrument in the hands of God so as to share with you a word of solace and encouragement which Jesus Christ has entrusted to the Church.

With these few lines I wish to greet all our emigrants in Australia. Aware of the fact that you have a special devotion toward Our Lady of Ta Pinu, I put this pastoral mission under Her protection.

25th September, 2011

+ Mario Grech  
Bishop of Gozo