



CONFERENTIA
EPISCOPALIS
MELITENSIS

DECREE

I. Following a three-month period dedicated to an intensive listening of the experiences, opinions and convictions of a very wide spectrum of witnesses and experts; and a subsequent phase of prayer, personal and ecclesial discernment, reflection and consultation, We, the Bishops, members of the Maltese Episcopal Conference, re-affirm that, while taking into account our responsibility to safeguard the faith of the Church, as well as our duty to protect the Christian faithful, hereby decree that:

The Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo disassociate themselves from Komunità Ġesù Salvatur. Priests and religious are not permitted to participate in meetings organised by this Community. These meetings cannot be held in churches or chapels or in any other property belonging to the Archdiocese of Malta, the Diocese of Gozo, religious orders and ecclesial lay associations. Lay persons should not attend any activities organised by Komunità Ġesù Salvatur.

The above-stated decision has been taken for these reasons:

II. *Firstly*, a fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture during talks and meetings organised by Komunità Ġesù Salvatur reveals a very narrow understanding of the Word of God. Fundamentalism tends to adopt very restricted points of view. The non-critical reading of certain texts of the Bible serves to reinforce ideas and attitudes that are marked by prejudices quite contrary to the Gospel.

Little or no importance is given by the Community to the Tradition of the Church and its Magisterium. A document published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, reminds the Catholic faithful that “the fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life. It can deceive these people, offering them interpretations that are pious but illusory, instead of telling them that the Bible does not necessarily contain an immediate answer to each and every problem. Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations”.¹

¹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 23rd April 1993, www.catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm, par. I, F

Secondly, Komunità Gesù Salvatur reveals Neo-Gnostic and Neo-Pelagian tendencies. These trends have been clearly outlined by the Letter *Placuit Deo*² and the Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*.³ In the latter, he warns Christians about the dangers of contemporary Gnosticism. He affirms that “Gnostics think that their explanations can make the entirety of the faith and the Gospel perfectly comprehensible. They absolutise their own theories and force others to submit to their way of thinking” (*GE* no. 39). It has been observed that certain aspects of the Christian faith are indeed absolutised by Komunità Gesù Salvatur, while forcing the members and others present to embrace, for example, a flawed understanding of redemptive suffering, an improper interpretation of scriptural texts, a distorted attitude to persons who face different challenging situations in life and the preaching of a prosperity gospel.

Komunità Gesù Salvatur demonstrates Neo-Pelagian tendencies: “although they speak warmly of God’s grace”, the leaders and other persons who have some kind of role of authority, and some of the other members, “ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style” (*GE* no. 49).

In light of these two tendencies, although the talks given during Komunità Gesù Salvatur meetings and *Rhema* celebrations, seem to be pious, edifying, and to encourage listeners to lead a committed Christian life and show moral and spiritual resilience, the content is, at times, doctrinally erroneous and confusing, if not also bizarre. The Community embraces a distorted ecclesiology and therefore a flawed theology of salvation: a sharp divide between the elect *vs* the damned; those who believe *vs* those who do not; those who “act calmly” and obey the orders of the Community (orders that are deemed to be of “divine” origin) *vs* those who do not (and are indeed accused to be “possessed”).

Thirdly, the Community reveals an improper understanding of the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts. The Letter by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* on the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and mission of the Church⁴ provides a list of criteria for the discernment of charismatic gifts. In order to recognise the authentically ecclesial nature of such charisms, one is to embrace the Catholic faith in all fullness and to be in full communion with the Pope and the local bishop.

Fourthly, cases of alleged psychological and spiritual abuse have marred the activity of Komunità Gesù Salvatur. Whatever any spiritual good carried out over the years by the Community, this never justifies the alleged psychological and spiritual abuse perpetrated. The leaders and, at times, the intercessors allegedly say the right thing at the opportune moment in order to camouflage their abuse. Unfortunately, this is a case of preying upon vulnerable people who are often seeking a sense of belonging and consolation. In this light, Komunità Gesù Salvatur demonstrates the sociological characteristics of a closed cult community which is causing untold harm to many of its members, most of whom are unfortunately unaware of it.

² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Placuit Deo*, 22nd February 2018, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20180222_placuit-deo_en.html

³ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, 19th March 2018 www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, 15th May 2016, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20160516_iuvenescit-ecclesia_en.html

III. Creation of a Support Team

With regard to the above considerations concerning Komunità Ġesù Salvatur, and in order for the Church to live up to its role as a mother who accompanies her sons and daughters in all the experiences of life, the dioceses of Malta and Gozo are taking the initiative to offer support services to those who have undergone painful experiences, or those who in due course, become aware of what they have been through because of their contacts with the Community, and request assistance.

A confidential helpline is therefore being set up at the Archbishop's Curia, Floriana (tel. no. 25906510, during office hours, or by writing an e-mail to this address: support@maltadiocese.org) for all those who, in the context of their experience or experiences in and/or with Komunità Ġesù Salvatur require the mentioned support which is being freely offered by competent professionals.

Dated, 3rd January 2021,
Solemnity of the Epiphany of Our Lord,
at the Archbishop's Curia, Floriana,
Seat of the Maltese Episcopal Conference

+ Charles Jude Scicluna

✠ Charles Jude Scicluna
President, Maltese Episcopal Conference

+ Anton Teuma

✠ Anton Teuma
Bishop of Gozo

+ Joseph Galea-Curmi

✠ Joseph Galea-Curmi
Auxiliary bishop

Fr Jimmy Bonnici

General Secretary
Maltese Episcopal Conference

