

**Secretariat for Catechesis
Press Conference – 3 June 2008
Media Handout**

Consultative Document on Religious Education in schools

Over these past years the Church, through the Secretariat for Catechesis, has been reflecting and re-evaluating Religious Education in Schools. The Local Synod has identified the need to define Religious Education, to initiate a process of revision of syllabi and textbooks. strengthen teachers' ongoing formation and to consolidate Religious Counselling in Schools.

The desire to review and strengthen the process of Religious Education in Schools was evident at all levels of the Church, with the issue cropping up at every diocesan meeting. The subcommittee set up by the Secretariat for Catechesis is presenting a working document after four years of extensive research and consultation with various individuals. On the basis of an in- depth analysis on the changes in Maltese society, and on the developments in Education, the document presents a definition of Religious Education that reflects the needs of the Maltese community.

Dr. Adrian Gellel, Chairperson of the subcommittee said this was the most laborious task of all the process since there is no one agreed upon model in any Western country. The incessant and drastic changes that occur in religion, society and the relationships between religions, society and the individuals compel the Church and policy makers to embark on continuous reevaluation of the subject that meets the requirements of students and society.

The document, Religious Education in Malta, will be discussed during a National Conference open to the public on Thursday 12th June 2008 at 18.00 at the Ballroom of the Hotel Phoenicia. The aim of the conference is to get the widest possible feedback on the proposals in order to prepare a National Policy for the approval of the Maltese Episcopal Conference.

It is the aim of the document to clarify the distinction between Religious Education and parish Catechesis. Central to Religious Education as proposed by the document is students' empowerment with a language that will potentially enable them to live fully and to face the challenges they encounter in their personal and social life. It is hoped that Religious Education will be better equipped to educate students holistically by helping them to construct their personal identity and assisting them to live in a community in respect of others by being morally and ethically responsible. Without renouncing to the centrality of the Catholic faith, the document also proposes to introduce students to the beauty found in other faith traditions. Such understanding is considered to be central for social conviviality and for living the good life.

Amongst the various initiatives proposed by the document is the increase in the number of Religious Education lessons in Church Schools, the restructuring of Religious Counselling and the introduction of Religious Education support teachers in Primary Schools.