



Circular 9/2009

Letter of H.L. Mgr. Mario Grech
on the occasion of the inauguration of
The Diocesan Eucharistic Congress

**“Sunday is the synthesis of the Christian life”
(Dies Domini, n.81)**

My Beloved,

The Day of the Lord has been stolen from us! The conscience of some people is so blunted that they have not realised that our Sundays have been commandeered! Over a period of time, little choices have been made which were, little by little, eroding the day of Sunday. The reasons we have used in seeking to justify the destruction of Sunday have been varied: pressure of work during the week, no time available to cope with daily chores, the necessity of improving the economy to increase wealth, tourism and its demands, etc.

But we are seeing signs that reveal to us the fact that, because we failed to respect the Sunday, we are paying a familial and social price.

For us citizens the Sunday is a need bound to the dignity of human nature. The worker has a right to period of cultural refreshment and rest, on his own or with others. The family has the right and duty to meet together, at least once a week. It is a human right for a person to have time in his life to develop and use his talents. It is also a human right for one to have the space in which to do voluntary work. Man justly expects the social structure to be such as to not oblige him to work on Sundays or to force him to do, on his day of rest, what he does during weekdays.

Moreover, for us Christian citizens, Sunday is the synthesis of the Christian life because every Sunday we celebrate the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary and his victory over sin and death. Every Sunday, the ecclesial community meets to share the Word of God and the Eucharist. An ancient icon of the disciples of Christ provides evidence that "*on the first day of the week we gathered together to break bread*" (Acts 20, 7), in the sense that the disciples used to meet to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. So at Mass, the disciples not only meet the living Christ, but also meet each other and build each other in the Church.

Our participation in the Sunday Mass, more than being a precept, is tied to our identity and mission as the People of God. We do not just celebrate the Eucharist, but we live it. In Jesus, who is given for us in the Eucharist, the Christian finds the example and the power to give himself lovingly to others whom he might meet in the diverse situations of life: in the family, at work, in his contact with the poor of our time – like the unemployed, the sick, the drug addicts, the orphans, unmarried mothers... It is a fact that the Eucharistic cult drives us forcefully to develop within ourselves that "social love" which prefers the common good to private benefits. The life and mission of the ecclesial community – priests and laity – depend on the quality of our contribution in the Eucharist. The Eucharist does not end with the Mass celebration or at the end of the Eucharistic adoration, but continues to act after we leave the church.

Without the Eucharist, the Christian community dies. The fact that many celebrate the Eucharist, particularly on the Day of the Lord, but remain outside the Church and do not live the Eucharist, engender serious pastoral concern and should stimulate us to find out why so many masses, communions and other Eucharistic devotions are not producing more conversions in us as individuals, in the ecclesial communities and in the social structures where Christians are present.

For these reasons, I am inaugurating a Diocesan Eucharistic Congress that will be celebrated from Thursday, 15th October until the feast of Christ the King. We are doing this to commemorate the 80th year after the first Eucharistic Congress in Gozo in 1929; but we are doing it more because we need to reflect, pray and take actions so that our Church today not only continues to treasure the Sunday as a special day, but also to help society to revise its way of living on this day by proposing to it this gift that Christ and the Church are giving us because "this is the day that God has made" (Psalm 118[117], 24).

While I invite you all in the activities of formation and celebration as indicated in the program prepared for this Congress, I exhort you to offer prayers to the Holy Trinity so that the Congress will be a moment of grace for the Church and for our island.

We implore God to make us a more Eucharistic Church.

Given from the Bishop's Curia, today Saturday, 10th October 2009.

Mgr. Salv Debrincat
Chancellor

+ Mario Grech
Bishop of Gozo