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STATEMENT BY THE MALTESE BISHOPS ON THE CIVIL UNIONS BILL

In the light of the discussion which will be taking place in Parliament regarding the Bill on Civil Unions, we Bishops would like to offer this reflection, our duty being solely that of proclaiming the Good News out of the conviction that, as Pope Francis states, faith “does not merely grant interior firmness” to the believer, but “it also sheds light on every human relationship because it is born of love and reflects God’s own love”.¹

Although the Bill is introducing various new elements in reference to marriage and family, which call for a profound and ponderate reflection, it seems that a particular novelty of this Bill is the registration of a partnership as a civil union between two persons of the same sex.

First of all, we should keep in mind that through this Bill we are discussing persons and their lives. Consequently, in order that this may be a mature discussion, it should reflect a profound respect towards those persons. As Pope Francis recently said referring to persons with a homosexual orientation, “in life God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation”.²

In line with Pope Francis’ example, we do not intend to repeat “the teaching of the Church” on this issue which “is clear”.³ We invite all those involved in Christian formation and catechesis to continue proposing what the Church teaches in this regard.

We trust that our Members of Parliament will do their outmost so that while discussing this Bill, they show respect towards all the persons involved and at the same time consider the common good.

According to the Bill, the “partners in a civil union” will be given the right for child adoption. We consider such an issue of a very delicate nature similar to every issue that involves children and the child’s best interest. Since there are contrasting views on the issue, it seems to us that it will be wise if the legislator takes the necessary time to make the right decisions on this matter. Children should preferably be brought up by their parents, a man and a woman.

Moreover, we ask the Members of Parliament to continue taking measures that strengthen the family built upon marriage between a man and a woman. Considering that the family constituted by the unity in the difference between a man and a woman “remains the first and principle builder of society”,⁴ we encourage all those who are convinced of this truth to treasure the family and continue expressing their high regard towards this natural institution.

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¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei* (29th June 2013), 50.

² Id., *Interview given to Antonio Spadaro SI*, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* (19th September 2013).

³ Cf *ibidem*.

⁴ Cf Id., *Message of Pope Francis to participants in the 47th Social Week of Italian Catholics* (11th September 2013).