



CIRCULAR LETTER
of H.L. Mgr. Mario Grech
Bishop of Gozo

The voice of our brethren's blood cries out to us

Dears,

We have just celebrated the liturgical solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We feel drawn to this Divine Heart, as we contemplate the love of Jesus which led him to offer his blood for the redemption of mankind. This supreme example of Jesus's love should urge us to donate our blood to our brothers in need of it. Today, June 14, the World Day of Blood Donors is being celebrated worldwide. This Day reminds us of that great and beautiful gesture of so many people who, moved by their love toward others, regularly donate blood. It is a small deed of short duration, but it can save the life of a person.

Our hectic life often keeps us from reflecting on what is happening around us. We expect to find all the services available when we need them, but little do we reflect that our hospitals are daily called upon to provide life giving blood to sick persons. We might become aware of this reality through a personal or a family experience. We learn that blood donation is so very essential and precious. It cannot be bought and does not carry a price. Doctors and nurses state that the need for blood in the treatment of the sick is constant and its demand is always on the increase. We cannot remain impassive in the face of such a persistent need for blood! Blood donation is an act of love and solidarity towards the sick. Only a cold blooded person ignores the pleas for blood of the patient struggling for his life. Several Fathers of the Church have taught us that refusing to share our possessions with others is tantamount to stealing or threatening the life of the needy (*St. John Chrysostom*); one who hides one's wealth for his sole use is guilty of homicide (*St. Clement of Alexandria*). These teachings should help us form our conscience with regards to issue of blood donation. By donating our blood we would be giving life to someone whose health is in danger. The cry of our brothers in need of blood somehow reminds us of God's words to Cain: your brother's blood cries out to us from the earth (Gen. 4,10).

Today's Gospel speaks about the parable of the sown seed that yields fruit in plenty. In this festive season, we often commemorate saints who shed their blood for Christ. If we consider the blood of martyrs as the "seed of the Christians", how much more could we say that blood donated freely to whomever needs it is as a seed of a renewed human civilization overcoming egoism with generosity and solidarity. The more the

practice of blood donation spreads and consolidates, the more a culture of generosity and altruism is affirmed. When we donate blood we are giving ourselves to others; we are spreading the spirit of solidarity, in particular with the sick and weak; we are weaving a strong sense of fraternity and recognizing that as humans we share the same blood - blood of the same colour and having the same value!

Blood donation besides being an honourable humanitarian gesture is also an exemplary religious act. The Sharing of one's blood with others is a high form of charity that puts into practice Jesus's commandment of love. The sick person who receives the blood provides us the occasion to touch Jesus. Just as Jesus said that he was hungry and we fed him and was thirsty and we gave him to drink, in the same way, he can say that he needed blood and we gave it to him. Apart from this, when a person donates blood, that person would be imitating Jesus who gave us his blood in the Eucharist – who, on the cross, shed his blood so that we would live. Those who participate in the Eucharist, especially in the Sunday mass, drink from the chalice of the blood of Jesus, this same blood mixed with their blood passes back into the veins of Christ present in the sick person.

I feel grateful that, in Gozo, we have a good number of blood donors. First and foremost I must therefore salute those who regularly donate blood. You are great benefactors of ours, and I encourage you to continue this sacred action. At the same time, I encourage others, especially young persons, not to procrastinate in deciding to invest their love in this blood bank. I suggest that everyone, at some time or other during his/her lifetime, makes a donation of blood. I also invite the parish communities to make blood donation one of the regular parish activities. When we donate blood we are communicating the joy of the Gospel: every blood donation continues to unveil the merciful face of God the Father.

I close by saluting and thanking, in the name of the Church, all those who work in the blood transfusion section, and encourage them to continue in this special ministry of theirs.

Given from the Bishop's Curia, Victoria, today. Friday, June 12, Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

✠ Mario Grech
Bishop of Gozo

N.B. To be read in the Masses of Saturday evening and Sunday, 13 and 14 June.