

# LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

## *The Joy of Love*

Like the star which led the Magi towards their encounter with Jesus, the Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of Love* enlightens our families in their journey towards Jesus as his disciples.

This is relevant also to couples and families in situations involving separated or divorced persons who are presently in a new union. Although they may have “lost” their first marriage, some of these persons have not lost their faith in Jesus. Among them we find some who earnestly desire to live at peace with God and his Church, so much so that they are asking us what they can do to be able to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Like the Magi, who *took a different route* after they met Jesus (see Mt 2, 12), so these persons – sometimes after a long and strenuous journey - could encounter Christ, who offers them a future even when it is impossible for them to follow the same route they used before.

Through accompaniment and honest discernment, God is able to open new paths for these persons. Even after they had previously experienced a journey characterised by the “darkness” of bad choices or sour experiences of abandonment or betrayal. In their encounter with Jesus and the Church, these persons find a “light” that will enlighten their present life situation and help them set out on the road of return to God, and with great hope and courage treasure the joy of love.

Therefore, following the directions of Pope Francis, we the Bishops of Malta and Gozo are presenting these guidelines to the priest in our dioceses to take part in accompanying those persons who wish to read the story of their life in the light of Jesus.

WE invite whoever is in a similar situation and desires our assistance in continuing to enlighten his/her conscience to seek a priest to accompany him/her.

These guidelines for priests are found on the website of the Church in Malta [www.thechurchinmalta.org](http://www.thechurchinmalta.org) and of the Church in Gozo [www.gozodiocese.org](http://www.gozodiocese.org).

Today, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2017.

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