

SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF THE PATRON SAINT OF THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA, 2017

**Excellency
Distinguished guests
Dear friends**

Your Excellency, it is a pleasure to join you on your very first celebration of the Feast of St John, here in Malta.

Let me welcome you, once again, as Ambassador to Malta for the Sovereign Military Order.

Although bilateral relations were established between Malta and the Sovereign Military Order of St John in 1966, the heritage which unites us goes back through the centuries.

Our heritage is founded on a shared respect for the Christian roots of our culture.

It is these roots that give us the strength to face the challenges of contemporary life, with renewed determination, and with strength of purpose.

Let me take this opportunity to extend my thanks, for the Order's sponsorship of a much-needed mobile medical clinic, at a special ceremony held last year, which was attended by the Order's dignitaries and members of the Maltese government.

The mobile clinic is further proof of the Order's continued commitment to make healthcare and

humanitarian outreach available to all people in need.

In fact, this sense of care and compassion has been a central feature of the Order's work since it was first established, a millennium ago.

I am pleased to note that, under its aid agency, Malteser International, the Order is assisting some

of the most vulnerable groups; in the poorest regions of the world.

The Order is sending a strong message of solidarity and of hope, thanks to the work being done by the volunteers and professionals who form part of Malteser International.

Malta is pleased to contribute to this mission in various ways, including recent financial assistance to the Order's aid efforts, in the aftermath of the destructive earthquake, which affected Central Italy, last year.

Based upon this mutual respect and friendship, I am confident that the positive relationship which exists between Malta and the Order shall continue to flourish, for many years ahead.

The value of friendship is essential to all of us. For this reason, Malta remains committed to promoting peaceful relationships and holistic wellbeing across our Mediterranean region, and beyond.

Let us be led, in all our endeavours for peace, by the inspiring words of Pope Francis, who said;

”Love and charity mean service. They mean helping others, and serving others. There are many people

who spend their lives in this way, in the service of others. ... When you forget yourself and think of others, this is love!" End quote.

The inspiring words of Pope Francis should compel us to love others, in a spirit of solidarity and of service.

I am confident that Your Excellency will continue to pursue these goals, and to build upon the fine work of your predecessors, by strengthening the bilateral relations between the Sovereign Military Order and Malta.

Dear friends,

Let us now raise our glasses and drink in celebration of the Feast Day of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Let us drink to the excellent relations between Malta and the Order, and for our endeavours to achieve solidarity, peace, and wellbeing, among all the peoples of the world.