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**LUQA - 18.04.2010 - 18.40**  
**International Airport of Malta**  
**Farewell ceremony**

**Original text**

Mr President,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come for me to bid farewell to Malta. I thank God for the opportunity to meet so many of you and to visit this beautiful island. I thank the President for his gracious words and I thank all of you who have given me such a warm and generous welcome. My journey has given me a deeper appreciation of how the Gospel preached by Saint Paul has shaped the spiritual identity of the Maltese people. As I leave you, let me encourage you once more to cultivate a deep awareness of your identity and to embrace the responsibilities that flow from it, especially by promoting the Gospel values that will grant you a clear vision of human dignity and the common origin and destiny of mankind.

Be an example, at home and abroad, of dynamic Christian living. Be proud of your Christian vocation. Cherish your religious and cultural heritage. Look to the future with hope, with profound respect for God's creation, with reverence for human life, and with high esteem for marriage and the integrity of the family! *Kunu wlied denji ta' San Pawl! [Be worthy sons and daughters of Saint Paul!]*

On account of its geographical position in the heart of the Mediterranean, many immigrants arrive on Malta's shores, some fleeing from situations of violence and persecution, others in search of better conditions of life. I am aware of the difficulties that welcoming a large number of people may cause, difficulties which cannot be solved by any country of first arrival on its own. At the same time, I am also confident that, on the strength of its Christian roots and its long and proud history of welcoming strangers, Malta will endeavour, with the support of other States and international organizations, to come to the aid of those who arrive here and to ensure that their rights be respected.

These noble goals depend on an unwavering dedication to the challenging task of dialogue and cooperation within the international and European communities, key forums in which Malta bears witness to the Christian values that have helped to shape her identity. Unity, solidarity and mutual respect stand at the basis of your social and political life. Inspired by your Catholic faith, they are the compass that will guide you in the search for authentic and integral development. The treasure of the Church's social teaching will inspire and guide these efforts. Never allow your true identity to be compromised by indifferentism or relativism. May you always remain faithful to the teaching of Saint Paul, who exhorts you to "be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Cor 16:13-14). *Grazzi hafna, il-Bambin iberikkom! [Many thanks and may God bless you!]*

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