



# **CHRISTIANS TOGETHER IN MALTA**

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*Malta Ecumenical Council*



ECUMENICAL SERVICE:  
WEEK OF PRAYER  
FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2022

21<sup>st</sup> January 2022

*We saw the star in the East,  
and we came to worship him (Mt 2:2)*

Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,  
Valletta, MALTA

## ORDER OF SERVICE

*Christians assemble in the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Valletta. Christian leaders and representatives of the various Churches assemble in the Sacristy where they prepare themselves for the Ecumenical Service.*

### STAND

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;  
Praise God, my soul, for in him are your health and salvation;  
    come all who hear,  
    into his presence draw near,  
joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who in all things is wondrously reigning,  
shields you from harm and is gently yet firmly sustaining.  
    Have you not seen  
    how your heart's wishes have been  
granted by God's wise ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who with blessing and power will  
    defend you;  
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you;  
    ponder anew  
    what the Almighty can do:  
God will for ever befriend you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!  
All that has life and breath, come now with praises  
before him!  
    Let the Amen  
    sound from God's people again:  
gladly for ever adore him.

*Tune: Lobe den Herren*  
Joachim Neander (1650-1680)  
*translated: Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)*  
*Music: Melody from Praxis Pietatis Melica, 1668,*  
as set in The Chorale Book for England, 1863.

## The Call to Worship

**Bishop Galea-Curmi:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Assembly:** Amen.

**Bishop Galea-Curmi:** Brothers and sisters, we are united today with fellow believers in the four corners of the world as we gather to pray for the visible unity of the Church. We do this with worship resources prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches. Our texts are inspired by the visit of the Magi to the new-born King, as described in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: "We observed his star in the East, and have come to pay him homage." Let us fix our eyes on the star that was seen in the East and allow it to lead us too. Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving and joy, bringing all the sick, the suffering, the marginalized, the refugees, and the uprooted before him, knowing that God can dispel our darkness with his light. As we pray today for the unity of the Church, may we and our communities also be lights that guide others to Jesus the Saviour.

*The Prior of the Carmelite Community welcomes those present.*

**Rev. Fr Alexander Scerri O.Carm.:** It is with great joy that, on behalf of the Carmelite Community, here in Valletta, I welcome you, Bishop Joseph, as well as the representatives of the different Christian Churches and Traditions in Malta. The Carmelite Community and our regular congregation of Christ's faithful are so glad that this Ecumenical Service is being held in this large church. Probably, this is the first time that an Ecumenical Service is being celebrated here. This is the House of God. It is also a much-loved shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary, welcomes all Christians, because she is our Mother. She is the Mother of Christian Unity. She desires that we get closer to each other as we pray for unity.

**Bishop Galea-Curmi:** Glory be to you Father Almighty, for you have revealed yourself through your creation and invited all people to stand in your presence. We have seen the star of Jesus in our lives and have come to worship him just as the Magi did. We offer him ourselves today and we ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

**Assembly:** Unite us with one another as we come from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West, old and young, men and women to bow down before you and offer you homage, our heavenly king. Amen.

### **Prayers of Forgiveness**

*Prepared and read out by students from the Junior College of the University of Malta*

1. Merciful Father, we ask forgiveness for the times we judged those who hold different beliefs and traditions, focusing on our differences rather than on what unites us. Lord, have mercy. **R. Lord, have mercy.**

2. Lord Jesus, we ask forgiveness for our lack of hope that makes us lose heart in your goodness and in that of our brethren. Christ, have mercy. **R. Christ, have mercy.**

3. Loving Father, we bring to you our selfishness that isolates us from your creative spirit and from the cry of those in need. Lord, have mercy. **R. Lord, have mercy.**

### **Listening to the Proclamation of God's Word**

**SIT**

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 8 (*responsively*)

*A member of the Carmelite Community of this church will lead the assembly in prayer.*

**Reader:** O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

**Assembly:** Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

**Reader:** When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

**Assembly:** what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

**Reader:** Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.

**Assembly:** You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.

**Reader:** All sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

**Assembly:** O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah (9:2-7) by a representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Andreasmemeinde)*

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.  
For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

*A Reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (5:8-14) by a representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church*

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light — for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says:

“Sleeper, awake!  
Rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

**STAND**

*The Assembly sings Alleluia*

*A Reading from the Holy Gospel of St Matthew (2:1-12) by a representative of the Church of England*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people, Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On

entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

*The Assembly sings Alleluia*

**SIT**

*Biblical reflection by Pastor Earl Pingston (Evangelical Baptist Church)*

*Meditative Organ music for reflection*

**REMAIN SEATED**

### **Sharing Christ's Light**

*The Chairperson of Christians Together in Malta (Malta Ecumenical Council) explains this year's symbolic gesture:*

A star led the Magi to Christ. Today this star points to the presence of Christ, who has been revealed to us and whose light shines on us. As the Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, we gather under this star today, adding our own stars to the sky, uniting our own gifts and prayers for the visible unity of Church. As we journey towards that goal, may our lives together give a luminous witness that leads others to know Christ. Representatives of the different Churches and Christian Traditions in Malta will therefore now add stars to the board, thus showing that the members of our Churches commit themselves to be closer to Christ and to each other.

*A piece of dark blue cloth is hung to evoke the night sky, on which a large star is placed. Paper stars are made available for different Church representatives, who are invited to come forward and add their stars to the cloth.*

### **Prayer by St Ephrem the Syrian**

*While this prayer will be read out by a representative of St Andrew's Scots' Church, a collection will be taken.*

This year's collection will go *Missio Malta* who will pass on the donation to Christian Churches in Africa who will see that persons are vaccinated in those lands and so are protected from the effects of the Covid-19 virus. You are invited to be generous.

*St Ephrem's Song of Light*

The Light of the just and joy of the upright is Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Begotten of the Father, he manifested himself to us.  
He came to rescue us from darkness and to fill us with the radiance of his light.  
Day is dawning upon us; the power of darkness is fading away.  
From the true Light there arises for us the light which illumines our darkened eyes.  
His glory shines upon the world and enlightens the very depths of the abyss.

Death is annihilated, night has vanished, and the gates of Sheol are broken.  
Creatures lying in darkness from ancient times are clothed in light.  
The dead arise from the dust and sing because they have a Saviour.  
He brings salvation and grants us life.  
He ascends to his Father on high.  
He will return in glorious splendour and shed his light on those gazing upon him.

**STAND**

**The Nicene Creed**

**Bishop Galea-Curmi:** Dear brothers and sisters, as we are united in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us proclaim our common faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Assembly:** We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,



true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father,  
who with the Father  
and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen,

*The assembly now sings this hymn:*

O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the works thy hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
'How great thou art, how great thou art!'  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
'How great thou art, how great thou art!'*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
when I look up from lofty mountain grandeur,  
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

And when I think that God his Son not sparing,  
sent him to die – I scarce can take it in,  
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
he bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
and take me home – what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then shall I bow in humble adoration  
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

Tune: *How Great Thou Art*  
Russian hymn  
*translated* Stuart K. Hine (1899-1989)

*Music* Swedish melody 'O store Gud'  
*arranged* Stuart K. Hine (1899-1989)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

*Prepared and read out by students from the Junior College of the University of Malta. After each intercession, the Assembly prays loudly: **In your mercy, hear our prayer!***

1. We pray, Lord, for all those who have at heart the ministry of Christian unity and who strive to do so in a spirit of love and understanding. Strengthen them, Lord, in their endeavours. **R/.**
2. Lord, we devote this world to you, during these tough times of differences, conflicts and judgements. Guide us towards the right path that strengthens our faith and may all the events we are going through bring us all together in the times we need it most. Grant us, Lord, peace in our hearts. **R/.**
3. Lord of unity, help us strengthen the spirit of communion by respecting you and others through our thoughts, words and actions. Endow us with the virtue of humility that opens us to love and friendship and give us a loyal heart that helps us be respectful to one another. **R/.**

4. Lord of consolation, we bring to you those who are unable to see goodness in themselves, in those around them and in the world. May your gentleness allow them to change their perspective and to open their heart to your spirit of renewal. **R/.**

5. Help us understand, Lord, that we are all your children, precious in your sight and cherished by you; we pray that you accompany us even in our moments of darkness. May we realise that since we are all your beloved sons and daughters, we are called to love and to ease the pain of those who are suffering close by or far away. **R/.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*A representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: One in Jesus Christ, let us pray together in the words he taught us. This is a very special prayer which is common to Christians of all Churches and Traditions. Each is invited to pray in his or her mother-tongue:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

### **The Sign of Peace**

**Please, note:** *Due to the current health directives, it is our duty to remind all present that you are to refrain from shaking other people's hands or giving a warm embrace.*

**Bishop Galea-Curmi:** Let us now greet each other and share the peace which is Christ's gift to us.

### **Sending and Blessing**

*Bishop Galea-Curmi and other Church Leaders will jointly impart this blessing*

**Church leaders:** Go now and live as children of light.

**Assembly:** For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

**Church leaders:** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

**Assembly:** Let us wake from sleep and Christ will shine upon us.

**Church leaders:** Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Assembly:** Amen. Thanks be to God.

*While Bishop Galea-Curmi and other Church ministers and Church representatives process back to the sacristy, the assembly sings the Final Hymn:*

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;  
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes, where thy body lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory thou o'er death has won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;  
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;  
let the Church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,  
for her Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting. **R/.**

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;  
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:  
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above. **R/.**

Tune: *A toi la gloire, O Ressuscité*  
Edmond Budry (1854-1932)  
*translated* Richard Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)  
*Music* George Frederick Handel (1685-1759)  
from *Judas Maccabaeus*, 1746

*A word of thanks is extended to the Carmelite Community, Valletta; the organist at this Service, Maestro Abraham D'Amato; and to all who have generously given a helping hand. Laudetur Iesus Christus!*