



# RESOURCE PACK

## LENT

2022

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**#YAHADMT**

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**JUSTICE AND PEACE  
COMMISSION**

# LEGEND



***Our wounded world***



***Reflection from 'Yahad' linked to Mass readings***



***Mass reading***



***Our response, in practice***



***From the movies***



***Inspirational quote***

# HONESTY



Every year the Maltese people give large sums of money to different charities. We all can visualise the line-up of people with large cheques on our TV screens every Christmas. However, the principle of solidarity which gels a society together and without which all slogans about "being in this together" are null and vacuous, is not lived primarily by giving donations to worthy causes.

In Malta, data published in parliament in 2021, indicates that an estimated half a billion euros worth of taxes went undeclared over a 10-year period.



In recent years, in place of virtue, we have witnessed the expansion of regulation. But in the absence of honest citizens, no rule, regulation or law will ever be enough to uphold the rule of law.

Trust is truly in short supply in our society. Many of the scandals which have recently hit the headlines – whether in Malta or abroad, in the political /economic field as well as in the Church – can be described as a betrayal of trust. We often underestimate the importance of trust in our daily lives. And if, at a higher level, all trust is lost in institutions which are supposed to lead us, guide us, protect us etc, we wouldn't be far away from a total break-down of our polis. And trust is a fragile thing – easy to lose and hard to regain.

The Commission strongly believes that, apart from an ethically and rule-of-law founded reform of many of our social, and economic institutions, in order to rebuild trust, the virtue of honesty is crucial. By definition, a virtuous person is someone who does good even when no one is looking and who acts from a sense of one's own dignity and that of others. As opposed to the hypocrites mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel, a righteous person doesn't perform righteous deeds to attract praise and doesn't refrain from breaking the law only when there is a high risk of getting caught. We therefore need honest citizens and politicians to counteract the narrative of sleaze, opportunism and dishonesty which is poisoning our social fabric.



Jesus said to his disciples:

"Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. (Mt 6:1-2)

## SIGNS OF HOPE

The Lost Wallet Dilemma: If you find a wallet stuffed with bank notes, do you pocket the cash or track down the owner to return it?



- ✓ Ask yourself: How would I rate myself when it comes to being honest with God, others and myself.
- ✓ Ask God for the grace of that truth which sets us free.
- ✓ If you've taken something which is not yours, give it back.
- ✓ Never speak ill of someone behind his/her back.
- ✓ Support honest civic and political activists and when giving "alms" to a worthy cause, don't blow your trumpet before you.



LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL (1997)

When a Jewish waiter and his family become victims of the Holocaust, he uses a perfect mixture of will, humour, and imagination to live up to the trust his son places in him.



When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth.  
When you cheat, you steal the right to fairness. Do you see?  
#KhaledHosseini

# TEMPERANCE



On the 2nd of March 2020, Miriam Pace was dug out from under the rubble of her own house. What was supposed to be a place of safety and comfort became a tomb. Various court proceedings are still ongoing to determine the culpability of the persons involved. But what is certain is that Miriam was a victim of injustice and unbridled greed.



In our society it is much easier to say "is that all?" than "thanks". But in today's Gospel, Jesus says no to more prestige, power and possessions, thus inviting us to rediscover the values of simplicity, sacrifice and sobriety.

Correctly understood, temperance and sacrifice are never an end in themselves. They are countercultural values which lead us in the direction of happiness, greater freedom and care for others on a personal and communitarian level. When we distinguish between our wants and our needs, we can overcome that limitless greed and "idolatry of money" which lead to the disintegration of our social fabric and which leaves in its wake countless victims.

However, even when faced with grave environmental threats, many refuse to live simply so that others may live. Such a response betrays not only an irresponsible short sightedness, but also an insensitive unwillingness to pay a price to stand in solidarity with those who will suffer the most from the devastating effects of climate change.

As Christians, we should be at the forefront in agreeing to respect the limits imposed by our love towards others and our common home. When denying the urge to always have more and be more, we are guided by the hope that one person living temperately gives a good example. A community living temperately represents a political force which can change a society for the better.



Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and when they were over, he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, One does not live on bread alone." (Lk 4:1-2)

## SIGNS OF HOPE

Dar Frate Jacoba: A haven of sustainability, spirituality and solidarity



- ✓ Ask yourself: In how you choose to live, are you respecting the limits imposed by love towards others and our common home? Could you live with less?
- ✓ Ask for the grace of receiving with immense gratitude and awe the gift of creation.
- ✓ Spend some time in the countryside or by the sea, alone and in silence, to rediscover the beauty of this gift.
- ✓ Get some steps in: if you have an errand close by, leave the car at home and choose to walk today.
- ✓ Curb the consumption: opt to stop buying things you don't really need, between now and the end of Lent. And maybe later too.



### A LIFE ON OUR PLANET (2020)

One man has seen more of the natural world than any other. This unique documentary is David Attenborough's witness statement as he recounts his life and the evolutionary history of life on Earth, whilst grieving the loss of wild places and offering a vision for the future.



Sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating [...] In reality, those who enjoy more and live better each moment are those who have given up dipping here and there, always on the look-out for what they do not have [...] They are able to shed unsatisfied needs, reducing their obsessiveness and weariness. Even living on little, they can live a lot, above all when they cultivate other pleasures and find satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in service, in developing their gifts, in music and art, in contact with nature, in prayer. Happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish you.

#Pope Francis



# COURAGE



On the 16th of October, 2017, a car-bomb ripped through a car in Bidnija and took the life of Malta's foremost investigative journalist: Daphne Caruana Galizia. In more ways than one, we can say that this was truly a watershed moment when it comes to Malta's modern political history. There is a clear before and after.



In the face of widespread opposition and scorn, it's never easy to stand up for what is right and just. It takes courage to take a principled stand, whilst seeking real dialogue, in the public sphere. It's the courage of those pioneers who choose the less-trodden path, of those bridge-builders who risk being misunderstood by all sides and labelled as outsiders by everyone, of those upright people who end up politically homeless, of the fool who chooses the well-being of the marginalized and the promotion of the common good over the comfort of the crowds.

It takes courage to abandon the comfort of your "clan" or the comfortable neutrality of the armchair critic.

As a community of faith we always have to ask ourselves if we are sometimes guilty of living the complacency of those who find themselves on the side of social privilege and thus fail to work courageously to transform the sinful structures of society. The transforming force of the Gospel can never be domesticated, and it's up to us to make sure that a holy restlessness continues burning from within as we engage in the hopeful renewal of society with courage and creativity. And if we ever get scared, let's turn to the Lord who is our "light", our "salvation" and our "refuge".



The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom should I fear?  
The Lord is my life's refuge;  
of whom should I be afraid?

(Ps 27:1)

## SIGNS OF HOPE

Fifteen or more men attacked a man to the cheers of onlookers, "beating the pulp out of him relentlessly", before throwing him into the sea. Despite the hostile environment, a small group of people could not bear to witness the dignity of another person so degraded and broken down and they decided to intervene.



- ✓ Ask yourself: What kind of language do I use when speaking of people I disagree with? Is it ungenerous and unkind?
- ✓ Ask God for the grace of always refraining from using language which destroys the "other" and for courage to speak out against racist, misogynistic, and homophobic "humour".
- ✓ Report any online hate speech to the competent authorities.
- ✓ Gather news information from multiple sources to avoid listening only to voices you agree with.
- ✓ Stand up for human rights, whenever these are in danger.



### JUST MERCY (2019)

World-renowned civil rights defence attorney Bryan Stevenson works to free a wrongly condemned death row prisoner. For anyone who is interested in the pursuit of justice, or who needs to be equally inspired and angered, this film is a must-see.



It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

#TheodoreRoosevelt



# MERCIFUL PATIENCE



The lifeless body of 29-year old Polish student Polina Dembska was found in Sliema's Independence Gardens early on Sunday, 2nd January, 2022. She often went there to feed and spend time with the stray cats in the gardens. An autopsy confirmed she had been raped and strangled. She had head injuries and marks on her neck which indicated she had been suffocated.



Our attempts at building a reconciled society founded on truth and justice not always seem to bear fruit. Like Peter along the lake of Gennesaret, we work hard all night without catching anything. Like him, besides trusting in God, we are called to be patient, with ourselves and with others.

In this long journey, marked by uncertainty and frustration, we also have to learn the importance of being merciful. The companions we choose to accompany on this journey will at some point or another disagree with us. The temptation to surround ourselves with like-minded people is never far off. Even more challenging is that fact that, if we truly want this journey to be one of reconciliation, we will share at least parts of the journey with people who are in need of our forgiveness.

Having received the mercy of a God who is "merciful and gracious", "slow to anger and abounding in kindness", we joyfully share with others the Good News of God's everlasting mercy towards the world. In a political context where the desire to crush the opponent is ever-present, in which political parties seek to outdo their opponents by engaging in daily shows of strength, there hardly seems to be space left for weak-looking mercy. And yet, if our aim is that of building a society in which no one is crushed or eliminated, we first have to meet each other in our humanity. Instead of looking upwards and indulging in an alienating exultation of strength and power, we look downwards as we strive to create a culture of encounter which can only be born out of our common brokenness.



Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.

(Ps 103:8)

## SIGNS OF HOPE

30 years ago she was the victim of a horrific sexual assault. Scarred for life, she somehow managed to find some peace. And forgiveness is part of her story.



- ✓ Ask yourself: Is there a situation, past or present, where you're struggling to let merciful patience triumph? Commit it to God and ask him to help you overcome it.
- ✓ Recognize God's mercy and patience towards you and give thanks.
- ✓ Be merciful and patient towards yourself and reach out to people you struggle to be patient with.
- ✓ Identify mechanisms which help you keep calm when you notice you're getting angry.
- ✓ We don't get to choose when and where we're called to show mercy. Today, whether you're cut off in traffic, or taken for granted, show mercy.



### INVICTUS (2009)

Invictus tells the inspiring true story of how Nelson Mandela joined forces with the Captain of South Africa's rugby team, to help unite their deeply divided country.



Success and failure, ultimately, have little to do with living the gospel. Jesus just stood with the outcasts until they were welcomed or until he was crucified — whichever came first.

#GregBoyle

# RECONCILIATION



On the 6th of April 2019, Lassana Cisse Souleymane, a 42-year-old migrant worker from the Ivory Coast, was killed in a drive-by shooting in Hal Far, in what is believed to be Malta's first racially-motivated murder. Two other African migrants were also injured in the attack. From what we know so far, it seems as if Lassana was killed for no other reason than that he "looked different".



Faced with numerous centrifugal forces which drive us further from each other, as Christians who in Christ are a "new creation" and who have been reconciled to God through Christ, we dare to become ministers of reconciliation and propose a path which brings us together. Besides tending to the wounds of all the victims of injustice, we are called to listen to their voices and learn about how they ended up there and seek concrete and creative ways to put spokes in the wheels of the underlying injustice.

Only by listening attentively to these voices can our hearts and minds be moved. True listening allows us to be true seekers of that truth without which justice and reconciliation will remain forever an illusion. True listening will allow us to meet others as fellow brothers and sisters. If we dare to do so, our lives will become wonderfully complicated, as we experience intensely what it means to be ministers of reconciliation in this beloved country of ours.



Brothers and sisters: Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation.

(2 Cor 5:17-18)

## SIGNS OF HOPE

On the 13th of September, 2021, President George Vella visited the site where Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed by a car bomb. This was the first visit by the Head of State since her 2017 murder and is in line with a recommendation in the inquiry report that the state reconcile with the family as part of the process of national healing and reconciliation.



- ✓ Ask yourself: Do any of your relationships need to be restored and made whole?
- ✓ Restore your relationship to God by receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ✓ If in a situation of conflict, apologise to someone or forgive someone. Both are equally difficult.
- ✓ Take time to reflect on whether you're making your mind up about people based on hearsay or flimsy evidence. Challenge yourself to put those thoughts aside and meet people as they really are.
- ✓ Offer to listen to someone who is struggling with a difficult relationship. Give them space to speak rather than offer answers.



### THE BEST OF ENEMIES (2019)

During the racially charged summer of 1971, Atwater and Ellis come together to co-chair a community summit on the desegregation of schools in Durham, North Carolina. The ensuing debate and battle soon lead to surprising revelations that change both of their lives forever.



Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing. #DesmondTutu

# CREATIVITY



In May 2021, it was reported that a staggering 1,500 homeless people, including 400 minors, applied for refuge at YMCA's shelters in the previous two years. Given that homelessness is often hidden or invisible, we often think that as a country we are immune to this social issue. Unfortunately, the truth is that many individuals and families are facing this reality on a daily level, very often in silence.



As we read in the Book of Proverbs: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov 29, 18). This failure of vision is also a failure of imagination, a failure to creatively imagine a different future than the present we live in, a failure to dream that another world is possible. Ultimately, this widespread lack of vision reflects a lack of hope. In this context, our society urgently needs to hear and rally around a prophetic and credible vision for us and our children. The vision proposed by the Church and specifically by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* speaks of a society built on justice, truth and solidarity. Many are those who will object to this vision, not in principle, but by arguing that it is an impossible and hopeless task. It is our duty, as Christians and citizens of goodwill, to provide indications of hope.

We are maybe in the presence of something new which is being born which, alas, is not clearly discernible in the alternatives of the present. The prophet Isaiah in today's first reading, speaks of a God who does something completely new and makes a way in what at first appears to be a barren desert and wasteland. Likewise, the Church itself ought to be a key indication of hope, a living alternative, creatively infusing and challenging the social sphere with a more radical vision of God's dream for humanity: In the priority we give to those with no economic value, in the way we strive for justice even when all seems lost, in the way we continue to faithfully engage in dialogue when all around us walls of prejudice are being erected.



See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.

(Is 43, 19)



## SIGNS OF HOPE

A soup kitchen in Valletta served more than 30,000 meals to 8,600 guests in its first four months of operation. The kitchen, which is run by Franciscan Friars, started serving guests in late August 2021. It offers lunches, packed meals for supper, showers and laundry facilities, as well as legal support, a barber and a psychiatrist's help.



- ✓ Ask yourself: Are there social situations which seem hopeless or areas in your life where you feel "stuck"?
- ✓ Ask for the grace of believing that with the help of God and others, a way forward is possible.
- ✓ Think of creative and simple ways to get unstuck. Write them down.
- ✓ Start simple: If for example you think that nowadays people have become too harsh with each other, send a quick encouraging text, out of the blue, right now.
- ✓ Brainstorm with friends and colleagues, creative ways in which we can make our country a better place to live in.



### AS IT IS IN HEAVEN (2004)

A famous international conductor returns to his small childhood town in Sweden for early retirement. He's asked to help with the church choir. He affects the lives of all in the choir.



Creative courage ... emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties. In the face of difficulty, we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. At times, difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had. #PopeFrancis