

To a deeper consciousness of God's presence



The Congregational Chapter 2021 theme and logo invite us:

To a deeper consciousness of God's presence:

God's presence is **within us**.

God's presence is **around us** within the nature we set our eyes on.

God's presence is **in those whom we form a community** with

God's presence is in our companion **partners-in-mission**.

God's presence is in the **women and children we minister to** in our Shelters.

God's presence is in those whom **we minister to in our Parishes**.

God's presence is in our **benefactors who support our mission** in one way or another.

We ask God for the grace To **Open Our Eyes and our Hearts** to this myriad of persons

- who have a face
- who have a name
- who have life story
- who have been entrusted to our love, care and attention.

We place before God their **facial expressions** very often distorted through their total pain due to the physical, spiritual (loss of meaning in their lives), psychological and social pain which they endured day in day out for some reason or other.

We pray for them so that we can **encourage them** to lift up their eyes to the ever faithful and merciful God who **reaches out** to them through each and every one of us. We pray that through us they can **feel Gods embrace** so warm, so tender with its reassuring and healing power as it **heals** gradually their life's wounds and bruises. We pray that **God fills their empty hearts** with abundant love and their minds with the real peace that comes from God alone.

The energy of Love at the heart of the Universe.

The people we minister to are very often individuals and families whose love has been either cheated, mistreated and/or abused on various levels.

The visible marks of abuse visible to our human eyes or worse still their unseen and un-tangible marks which at times are more painful than those that are apparent to our eyes.

We pray that God fills us and those we minister to with the energy of love. A love similar to that which St Paul referred to as "a love that pushes us" to fight against the social and political barriers of inhumanity, of injustice, of incomprehension, of the lack of sympathy and understanding.

Called to grow in awareness of this Love,

A growth in the awareness of God's love has to be like the tree which is planted close to the river banks and has its roots constantly soaked with the waters of God's love.

Our riverbank is our **daily encounter and reflection with God's Word** as it is celebrated and imparted to us in daily liturgy of the Eucharist or the quiet time that we make space for it in our daily routines.

*Drawn by Love
Passionate for Justice*

Called to be Drawn by this Love,

God the creator of all beings draws us to this love. Unless God draws us to love, our labour and toil would be in vain, as the psalm goes.

Called to spontaneously flow outward in zeal,

It is this love that draws us constantly and that fuels and sets fire to a spontaneous flow of zeal : the fourth vow that the RGS profess to. Zeal for the reconciliation and salvation for all those we interact with, be it the persons we minister to, the community we are called to live in and the partners-in-mission alongside we are called to serve. Called to that same zeal which filled St John Eudes and St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier to the point of working relentlessly, as we establish safe havens through our Shelters and the parish communities that we serve in.

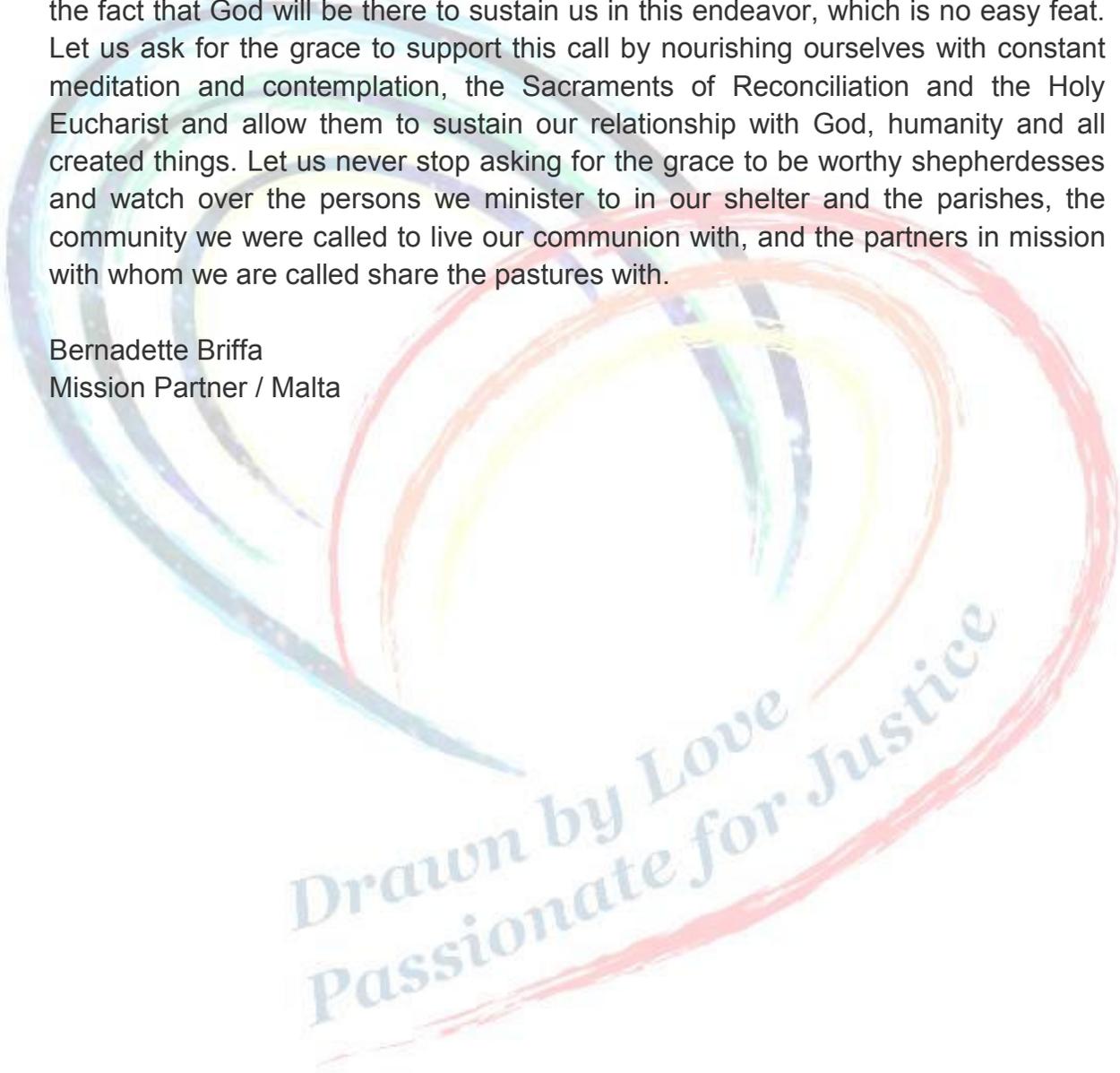
Called to be impelled to be passionate for justice to challenge the prevailing structures of injustice

This same zeal fuels our passion for justice, which is often trampled upon on various levels in various scenarios. The women and children in our Shelters on a daily basis await justice to be served - as they denounce the crime brought about through Domestic Violence. They await social housing justice to be given a roof over their head - they have no home to go to or the one they have is not safe enough to return to. The parishioners that we serve on a daily basis await justice to be served - as they expect decent daily wages from their jobs, social benefits when in need, social housing once they cannot compete within the ever rising high rental market, timely hospital appointments for when their health is challenged.

Called to live in right relationship with humankind and all creation

God calls us to live in right relationship with humankind with each other and all creation. Let us welcome this call with an open heart and an open mind aware of the fact that God will be there to sustain us in this endeavor, which is no easy feat. Let us ask for the grace to support this call by nourishing ourselves with constant meditation and contemplation, the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist and allow them to sustain our relationship with God, humanity and all created things. Let us never stop asking for the grace to be worthy shepherdesses and watch over the persons we minister to in our shelter and the parishes, the community we were called to live our communion with, and the partners in mission with whom we are called share the pastures with.

Bernadette Briffa
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*Drawn by Love
Passionate for Justice*