

21st February 2026

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A CALL TO SELFLESS LOVE**PASTORAL LETTER LENT 2026**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Lent is a journey of conversion, a time when the Church gently but firmly turns our gaze away from ourselves and invites us to allow God to enlighten our hearts and become aware of the needs of others. Through fasting, prayer and almsgiving, we learn again that love always comes at a cost, and that real discipleship involves the loving gift of self and solidarity with others. In this season, when we walk with Christ toward the cross, we are invited to reflect on how our lives, like that of Christ on the cross, can become a source of new life for others.

Today, many citizens suffer from serious illnesses and poor quality of life. Many of them are waiting, often for years, for the possibility of renewed life through organ transplantation. Every name on a waiting list represents a human face, a family, a story of hope sustained by love and the solidarity of others.

As your shepherds, at the beginning of Lent, we wish to reflect with you, in the light of our Christian faith, on the beautiful and noble act of giving, generously and lovingly, an organ to another person not only to save a life, but also to improve the quality of life of the organ recipient. This reflection is offered to develop consciences, to dispel fears and to encourage a generous and prayerful discernment rooted in respect for human dignity.

The human being: a gift from God

We believe that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:27). Our body is not a mere biological instrument; it is integral to who we are. Through the body, we love and serve each other, suffer and give glory to God. For this reason, the Church holds the human body in the highest reverence, in life and in death.

Organ donation must always be understood within this profound respect for the unity of body and soul. It is never a matter of using or exploiting the body, but of honouring it as a gift entrusted to us by God.

Organ donation as an act of love

When carried out ethically, organ donation can be a concrete expression of solidarity and self-giving, echoing Christ's own gift of himself for the life of the world.

The Church has consistently described organ donation as "a genuine act of love" and "a generous gift" offered for the good of another. This gift does not diminish the dignity of the donor. On the contrary, it reveals the deepest truth of human life: that we are made for communion and for love.

For living donors, such generosity must never place one's own life or essential bodily functions in grave danger. For deceased donors, the gift of organs can allow life to flourish even in the face of death, transforming loss into hope and generosity.

Ethical foundations and moral safeguards

The Church supports organ donation when it is done with clear ethical foundations and strong moral safeguards. Organ donation after death, both in the case of neurological criteria, that is, when the brain is no longer working, and in the case of circulatory criteria, that is when the heart is no longer working, is a noble and meritorious act when the following conditions are met:

- Free and informed consent is essential. Organ donation must always be voluntary and never coerced directly or indirectly. The certainty of death must be rigorously established before organs are removed. Death must never be caused or hastened for the purpose of obtaining organs.
- There must be a clear distinction between the medical team that is caring for the patient and the doctors effecting the transplant so that the integrity of the holistic treatment that should be given to the patient until death is safeguarded as long as this treatment is beneficial.
- The dignity of the donor must be upheld. The body of the deceased should be treated with reverence, and funeral rites must be respected.
- No commercialisation is ethically acceptable. Human organs must never be bought

or sold; any form of commercialisation of the body or of a part of it is contrary to human dignity. The body and its organs must remain within the logic of gift, not market exchange.

Addressing fears and misunderstandings

Some people express understandable concerns: fear of misuse, uncertainty about medical definitions of death, or discomfort with the idea of donating the body after death. These concerns need to be addressed through honest and open dialogue.

We encourage you to seek reliable medical and ethical information, and to speak with healthcare professionals who respect human life at all stages. The Church invites each person to take a decision when well-informed and after serious reflection and prayer, in accordance with conscience.

A pastoral invitation to families

Families play a crucial role in decisions regarding organ donation. We urge family members to speak openly with one another about their wishes and values. Such discussions, though difficult, can be an act of love that brings clarity and peace at moments of great vulnerability.

Let our families be places where the Gospel of life is lived and proclaimed, where generosity is nurtured, where solidarity flourishes and where suffering is met with compassion.

Hope rooted in the Resurrection

We Christians believe that death is not the end. Our faith in the Resurrection assures us that with the power of the Risen Christ, the body, though it returns to dust, is ultimately destined for glory. Organ donation does not contradict this hope. On the contrary, it can become a final testimony of faith in life that is stronger than death.

In giving part of oneself so that another may live, the donor participates in the paschal mystery of Christ, where death gives way to life.

“Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37)

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which Jesus relates in reply to the question of a law expert who asks him who his neighbour is, the man correctly identifies the Samaritan as the

neighbour because he “showed him mercy.” And Jesus tells him: “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37), emphasising active love and practical compassion.

Dear brothers and sisters, we view organ donation as a path of Christian discipleship: one marked by love, compassion, solidarity, responsibility and profound respect for life. We encourage you to be Good Samaritans by registering as organ donors.

We ask you to pray, reflect and seek guidance, trusting that the Holy Spirit enlightens every sincere conscience. May the Lord, who is the giver of every good gift, bless all those who work in healthcare and strengthen the efforts of all those who work to promote organ donation as an act of generous solidarity. May he comfort those who suffer and arouse in our hearts a renewed commitment to the Gospel of life.

We cordially impart our pastoral blessing to all of you.

Today, Wednesday, 11th February 2026, liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes.

✠ Charles J. Scicluna

Archbishop of Malta

✠ Joseph Galea-Curmi

Auxiliary Bishop of Malta

✠ Anton Teuma

Bishop of Gozo

Fr Jimmy Bonnici

Secretary for the Maltese Episcopal Conference