



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 220403a

Sunday 03.04.2022

Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Francis in Malta – Visit to Saint Paul's Grotto in Rabat

This morning, before a brief private meeting with the members of the Society of Jesus, the Holy Father Francis travelled by car to Saint Peter's Grotto in Rabat.

Upon arrival at Saint Paul's Basilica, the Pope was greeted by the Archpriest and the Collegiate Chapter. He then descended into the Grotto, and after a moment of private prayer and lighting a votive candle, Pope Francis recited a prayer to Saint Paul.

At the end, the Holy Father signed the Book of Honour and, as he passed through the Church of Saint Publius, inside the Basilica, he greeted fourteen religious leaders. He then went inside Saint Paul's Basilica, where he was awaited by some sick people and those assisted by Caritas. After pausing before the Blessed Sacrament, and following the recitation of the Prayer of mercy and the final blessing, as he left the Basilica the Pope greeted various people and transferred by car to the Granaries in Floriana for the Eucharistic Celebration.

The following is the text of the prayers the Pope recited in Saint Paul's Grotto and in Saint Paul's Basilica:

Prayer in Saint Paul's Grotto

God of mercy,

in your wondrous providence

you wished the Apostle Paul

to proclaim your love to the inhabitants of Malta,

who did not yet know you.

He preached your word to them

and he healed their infirmities.

Saved from shipwreck,

Saint Paul and his fellow travelers

found here to welcome them

pagan people of kindly heart,

who treated them with rare humanity,

recognizing that they were in need

of shelter, security and assistance.

No one knew their names,

their place of birth or their social status;

they knew only one thing:

that these were people in need of help.

There was no time for discussions,

for judgements, analyses and calculations:

it was the time to lend a helping hand:

they left their jobs, and did exactly that.

They lit a great fire,

to dry them and warm them.

They welcomed them with open hearts

And, together with Publius,

first in government and in mercy,

they gave them shelter.

Good Father,

grant us the grace of a kindly heart

that beats with love for our brothers and sisters.

Help us to recognize from afar those in need,

struggling amidst the waves of the sea,

dashed against the reefs of unknown shores.

Grant that our compassion

be more than empty words,

but instead light a bonfire of welcome,

that can dispel the memory of the tempest,

warm hearts and bring them together:

the fireplace of a house built upon rock,

the one family of your children,

sisters and brothers all.

You love them without distinction

and you desire that they may be one

with your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord,

through the power of the fire sent from heaven,

your Holy Spirit,

who burns away all enmity

and in the darkness of night lights the way

to your kingdom of love and peace.

℟. Amen.

Prayer in Saint Paul's Basilica

O God, infinite is your mercy,

boundless the riches of your goodness:

graciously increase the faith

of the people consecrated to you,

so that all may grasp and rightly understand

the love that created them,

the blood that redeemed them,

and the Spirit that gave them rebirth.

Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.
