

H.G. Mgr. Charles J. Scicluna
Archbishop of Malta
Archbishop's Curia
FLORIANA FRN 1535

13 May 2015

**Request for the opening of the Process of the Cause for the Beatification
and Canonisation of Mgr. Mikiel Azzopardi, Founder of
Id-Dar tal-Providenza and Apostle of the Divine Providence.**

Your Grace,

It is twenty-eight years to the day that the Lord graciously called to His side in heaven Mgr Mikiel Azzopardi, a Maltese priest graced with love and tremendous pastoral zeal for the people of God. The Lord entrusted him, with the gift of the ministerial priesthood, so that through it he could bear evangelical witness especially through his special love towards the sick and persons with disabilities. He had an extraordinary faith in Divine Providence and a great love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. To a large number of people, Mgr Azzopardi was known for his holiness. As the current Director of Id-Dar tal-Providenza, the Home founded by Mgr. Mikiel Azzopardi fifty years ago, I therefore humbly request that the necessary preliminary research for his beatification and canonization be embarked upon.

Mgr. Mikiel Azzopardi was born in Valletta, Malta on 10th February 1910, of Toninu Azzopardi and Amalja neè Galea. He was baptised three days later at the Parish Church of Our Lady of Porto Salvo in Valletta. Mikiel received his First Holy Communion at the age of 6 years from Archbishop Dom Mauro Caruana OSB at St John's Co-Cathedral and a year later he was confirmed by the Auxiliary Bishop of Malta, Mgr. Angelo Portelli.

He was educated at the Government Primary School in St Elmo, Valletta, at the Seminary of the Diocese of Gozo, the Lyceum in Valletta and then at the Royal University of Malta where he commenced the Law Course.

In his adolescence, the indefatigable Mgr Enrico Dandria had invited him to start attending the Circolo Gioventù Cattolico (Catholic Youth Centre). The personality of Mgr Dandria had surely rubbed off on him tremendously.

After four years reading Law, he felt the call to the priesthood, and as a result decided to leave the University. With the blessing of Archbishop Caruana, he proceeded to Rome where he received his priestly formation at the Pontifical Scot's College and studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University from where he graduated in Theology.

Azzopardi was ordained to the priesthood on 22 December 1934 at the age of 24 by Archbishop Dom Mauro Caruana OSB. Not long after his ordination, the Archbishop appointed him as his personal assistant.

His first pastoral assignment was that of Prefect of Studies at the Archbishop's Seminary in Floriana. Six years later he was given a Government appointment as teacher of Religion at the Lyceum and later as Regional Spiritual Director for State Schools. Later he was appointed School Inspector in Religious Education, an assignment he held a long number of years. Concurrently he taught Catechesis at the Teachers' Training Colleges at Tal-Virtù and Ta' Giorni, as well as hosting every Friday a religious programme on Rediffusion, the only cable network on the Island at the time. It was during these popular programmes that he explained the Sunday Gospel to students of all schools in Malta and Gozo.

In 1940, he was appointed Ecclesiastical Assistant General of the Catholic Action and embarked on organizing and spreading this lay ecclesiastical movement in all parishes of Malta and Gozo. Following the Congress held in Qormi in 1943, which he labeled as "the Miracle of the Resurrection", he succeeded in transforming this group, after long years of work, into a strong lay force imbued with an apostolic spirit and a great love for God and the Church and a strong urge to serve one's neighbour.

Mgr. Azzopardi was indeed a truly charismatic leader who communicated with verve and enthusiasm and roused most of the members to embrace the mission entrusted to them by Catholic Action. He not only managed to organize Catholic Action Centres for adult men and women, adolescents and children in all parishes, but also managed to create various new initiatives for emigrants, members of the press, teachers, members of different professions, students, the sick and persons with disabilities.

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Within the Archdiocese of Malta he set up, amongst other initiatives, the Diocesan Steering Committee for Catholic Associations, as well as Parish Councils.

Dun Mikiel was appointed Conventual Member *Ad Honorem* of the Sovereign Military Order of St John and on January 21 January 1951 he was honoured by His Holiness Pope Pius XII with the title of *Cameriere Segreto di Sua Santità*. He was also appointed Honorary Canon of the Metropolitan Chapter. In 1968, Mgr Azzopardi was awarded with the Medal of Honour by the Confederation of the Civic Councils of Malta and on 1 June 1981, Pope John Paul II appointed him Honorary Prelate.

During the course of his pastoral work, he discovered that various persons with disabilities were living in a deplorable state so much so that they were even hidden in cellars in totally appalling conditions, and in certain cases even unbeknown to their siblings. Persons with disabilities were often ridiculed in public or sent to a hospital which was ill-equipped for their needs. Dun Mikiel also felt that various families with a disabled member had an urgent need to find people who offered them solace. It was then that the idea started to germinate within him to find a place where these persons could find an environment where to live – an environment that they deserved and that respected their dignity.

Therefore, on 12 September 1965, he started off with a generous donation of LM100 given to him by a lady who had saved the money for a vacation. This was the genesis of Id-Dar tal-Providenza, the first Home in Malta that offered residential services to persons with disability. Up to this very day, Id-Dar tal-Providenza remains a living miracle of the Divine Providence.

Mgr. Mikiel Azzopardi died on 13 May 1987 at the age of 77 and was buried, as he had always wished, in the courtyard of Id-Dar tal-Providenza amongst the persons with disabilities that he loved so intensely. His funeral mass took place at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta on 14 May 1987, and was presided by Archbishop Joseph Mercieca, in the presence of the highest authorities of the country.

Your Grace, I humbly implore you to accede to my request, which is undoubtedly embraced by the great majority of the population of these Islands, that if it is God's will, the Church would be able to present him as a model of the Christian and the Priestly life as she raises him to the homage of the altars.

Fr Martin Micallef
Director