



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

Archbishop Scicluna should mince his words

Let's agree that Christ is the main inspiration of any Archbishop. Christ would say it as-it-is even if it would irk the leaders of the community.

Christ wasn't always necessarily gracious in his words even though most times he would speak in metaphors to code the trying comments. However, the moment he sensed the hypocrisy he wouldn't mind going for the jugular.

But, and this is a crucial 'but'.

I think that if there is anything that I admired in the Christ (and this is not a theologically informed position) is that he was mindful of the context and the dose of vigour he put into it.

Now let's move on to the Leaders of the Church.

Every Archbishop, I recall in my lifetime, had his boons and drawbacks.

For example, in Archbishop Mercieca I used to admire his precautionary attitude and thoughtfulness notwithstanding that at times even just looking at him made me fall asleep. I also admired Archbishop Pawlu Cremona for his unworldliness, sanctity and his gentleness but conversely appeared far too frail and pint-sized in front of the dinosaurs that roam the Curia.

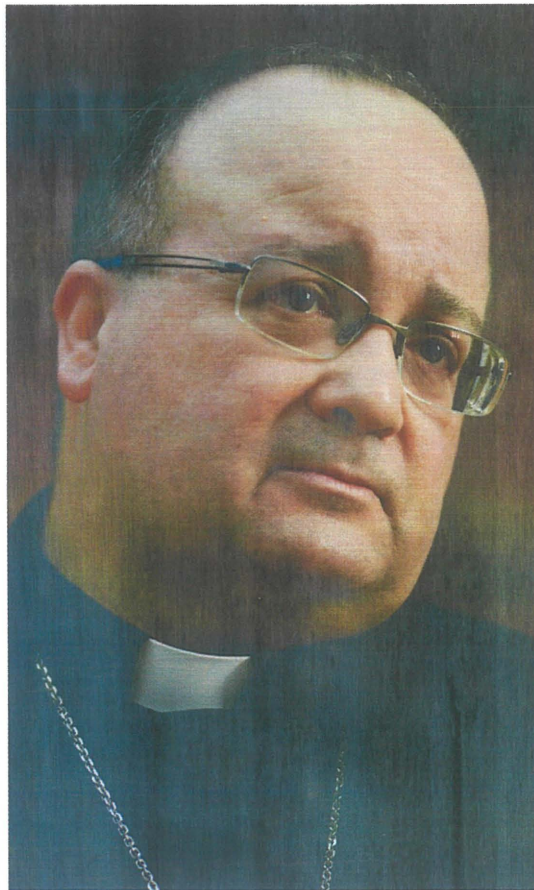
Archbishop Scicluna is another story altogether.

He comes across as resolute, flaunts his intellectual prowess and has this insouciance way of letting criticism wash over him. I like that he talks his mind but he also gets under my skin when he shoots from the hip. Scicluna seems to throw caution to the wind. Since being appointed Archbishop 4 years ago this situation has kept waning. I am sure it is not the case, but there is a sense of 'I can say it because I'm the Bishop', which is a very dangerous mind set to adopt.

I have been trying to decipher why Scicluna acts in this way.

On one hand as I have often remarked, it is good that the Bishops, the Priests, the religious, the laity are vociferous and speak their mind. On the other hand, we cannot just ignore the complexities of a community and the way the citizens process the information that comes their way. For example, people are still reeling after what happened in the 60's (the Church-Labour debacle). Mind you, I am not calling for self-censorship but for attentiveness.

All people in power who hold public positions need to understand that there are people who still reminisce the terrible behaviour and attitude of the Church in the 60s and the equally second-rate response of



the Labour Party of the time. Sadly, the citizens and the labour party apologists would be quick to connect what the Archbishop currently says to what happened then, even if one would think that people should have got over this.

Apart from that we are going through one of the most polarised political periods in these last thirty years within our political scene.

I reiterate that I am not suggesting that this is about refraining from expressing one's thoughts, even on controversial issues like governance, corruption, environment and so on and so forth.

What I would like to appeal for is that the Archbishop thinks through his words before communicating on whatever medium comes to mind. An Archbishop, the way I see it,

even if speaking on the most contentious of issues, should express his thoughts in a conciliatory way that focuses on sowing the seeds of unity and listens to the sensitivities of the community.

There is a lesson or two he might want to take from the President of the Republic who even though was strongly embedded in a political party has managed to rise above the discourse of confrontation and has done what the Curia should have been doing long ago; create a platform of debate, provide an opportunity and a space for people with different ideas to come together and create the momentum that will help transform our communities. How great would that be instead of estranging people that keep distancing themselves from the Church.

The Archbishop needs to understand that this is not about staying aloof in front of the myriad problems that we are faced with in our society. It would be wrong if he did that. With so much social, moral, spiritual and religious issues that need to be addressed I cannot think why he is solely focused on having a dig at the Government at every available opportunity without taking us through what he really wants to address packaged in the social teaching of the Church.

I believe that Scicluna was appointed by the Roman Curia to counter balance the discomfort that the Curia had with his predecessor. Scicluna, I believe, was selected because the Pope and his advisors thought that he had the right qualities to lead and manage a lacklustre, uninspiring and boring Church. He cannot Tweet or re-Tweet and in the most defensive of press releases try to reverse what he said when he should have thought things through. An Archbishop is there to lead, to teach and to listen, because good leaders talk less and listen more, respectable leaders are close to the pain and the suffering and less interested in making an impact. I have seen over the years that the less said in certain circumstances the more bearing one has.

If Archbishop Scicluna wants to be remembered as being an emulaton of Archbishop Gonzi then sadly he is on the right track. But we all know that with all the good that Gonzi did he will be remembered as a stain in the Church's history.

Archbishop Scicluna, I believe, merits to be remembered in a different way. I think Scicluna needs to change tact completely. It is crucial that he is humble enough and re-thinks his strategy.

If I was him, I would focus on what is really important in life that only the Church has a justifiable right to voice; like how we can share the care and the burden of each other, how to support the spiritual and material needy, how to listen and engage with the pain, how to help people find solace in the God they believe in.

The Archbishop knows that it is a job that no other but the Archbishop should do. It takes courage, but Scicluna has lots of it. It is the moment that he should adopt a different line of disputation.

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