

Editor- Frank Scicluna OAM MQR JP

Email- maltesejournal@gmail.com

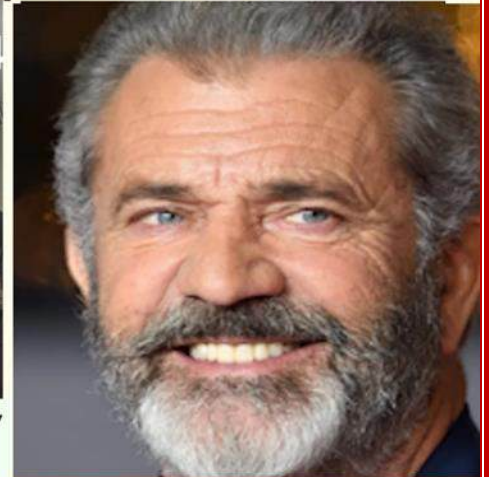


# Maltese e-Newsletter



27 Sept 2024  
USA

THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA ROBERT ABELA AND FAMILY AT THE MALTESE CENTER - NEW YORK CITY



## THE SIEGE OF MALTA

MEL GIBSON

AFM soldiers deployed in Lebanon



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VALLETTA



**SCIENCE IN THE CITY**  
2024



## BISHOP GALEA-CURMI: LACK OF RESPECT STEMS FROM A LACK OF PEACE IN THE HEART

Bishop Joseph Galea-Curmi has stated that when respect for one another is absent in society, it is because “there is no peace in the heart,” which leads to “sowing seeds of hatred.”

In an interview on *Għal Kulhadd* on [RTK103](#), the Bishop was asked to comment on the recent attack on police officers in Hamrun. He remarked that while we often discuss conflicts and wars in other countries, we should also focus on what is happening within our own communities in

Malta

Reflecting on the growing impatience and hostility in Maltese society, especially on social media, where people are quick to insult and attack others, the bishop emphasised the need for peace to take root in all aspects of society, starting from the smallest circles.

He explained that where peace is lacking in a person’s heart, they are more inclined to blame, insult, and harm others. “We should strive to be instruments of peace wherever we are—whether within our families, in public spaces, or even at local celebrations. It’s not necessary to use insults or obscene language to celebrate a patronal feast in a locality.”

This is not the first time Bishop Galea-Curmi has condemned such behaviour. He reiterated the importance of respect and the need to acknowledge wrongdoings. “We must recognise that what is wrong is wrong and not attempt to justify or excuse bad behaviour.”

**‘Freedom, justice, and peace work together’** During the interview, a listener wrote in, suggesting that freedom should be prioritised over peace and justice. In response, the Bishop emphasised that freedom, justice, and peace are interconnected. “These values work together in synergy, and one cannot exist without the others,” he explained, referencing Pope John Paul II’s teachings on human dignity and rights as essential for achieving peace.

**The social scourge of insults** Bishop Galea-Curmi highlighted the destructive impact of the culture of insults, especially on social media. He described it as a “social scourge” where individuals often post hurtful comments without considering the consequences. “Many times, people regret what they have written only after realising the harm they have caused.”

He urged people to reflect before speaking or posting online, noting that many insults stem from a heart burdened by pain or anger.

**‘Without peace, there is no future’** The bishop also underscored the importance of peace, drawing attention to Pope Francis’ focus on the theme. “We can live a good life in an environment of peace, but when we are constantly hearing about wars, we face a humanitarian threat. Without peace, people have neither a present nor a future.” He warned that wars lead to the “terrorism of the future” by traumatising children who are left without families, highlighting the long-lasting effects of conflict.

In a broader discussion, the Bishop recalled a conference where bishops and young people from different religions explored how the younger generation can become instruments of peace amid global conflicts. He emphasised the need for societies in the Mediterranean region to meet and discuss these themes to improve the lives of future generations. The Bishop concluded by calling for continued prayer for peace and for everyone to strive to become “instruments of peace” in their daily lives, noting that peace in the heart will lead to peace in society.

Source: [Newsbook.com.mt](#)



Dear Stephen Gatt,

You are likely aware of the recent Israeli air strikes in Lebanon that have killed hundreds of people in the deadliest escalation of cross-border attacks in decades.

Israel has warned civilians to evacuate targeted areas and thousands are now fleeing southern Lebanon safer regions. Consequently, 90,000 persons have been displaced and are seeking refuge in northern areas.

Tensions are high and resources are stretched. Even before the conflict, 80% of Lebanon's population was living in poverty, including the 1,5 million refugees. The Lebanese pound has lost over 90% of its value, making essential goods unaffordable. Public services, including healthcare and education, are collapsing, exacerbating the crisis.

The Order of Malta Lebanon already has established services and manages a network of 60 projects & programs serving the most vulnerable populations across the Lebanese territory. Like all Order of Malta projects, they remain apolitical and neutral, serving those in need without distinction.

**During this latest crisis, the Order's response is focused on fulfilling basic needs' assistance to the displaced population. They are providing food, medical and healthcare services and psychosocial support to the most affected population, with special attention to vulnerable groups (i.e. children, pregnant women, nursing women, elderlies and people with disabilities).**

**The Order of Malta Lebanon has issued an urgent appeal so that they can buy the following:  
5,000 blankets 180,000 hot meals and snacks 2,000 food stuff  
2,500 NFI kits 6,000 diapers for babies and adults Medicines  
Drinkable water Psychosocial Support materials**

I am reaching out to you to answer this call for aid.

Please consider a donation to support those impacted by this conflict. Gifts \$2 and more are tax deductible for Australian taxpayers. If you'd like to know more about the Lebanese Association and their response please let us know.

Thank you for your support. Please keep all those impacted by this conflict in your prayers.

Yours sincerely **John Murphy National Hospitaller.**

**Other ways to donate:**

Direct Deposit: The Order of Malta BSB 083-453 Account number: 448 881 897 Description: Lebanon Gatt

Post: Cheques payable to 'The Order of Malta'

sent to 'The Order of Malta, PO Box 79, CARINGBAH, NSW 2229'

Phone: Calling 02 9331 8477 (Please note the office is closed on weekends).



Stephanie Quintano

As President of the Henry and Inez Casolani Association, which was established by a decree from our Archbishop, I am writing to humbly seek your kind support for a cause of profound significance to both our Church and the Maltese people.

Our Association was formed specifically to advance the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of the Servants of God, Henry and Inez Casolani. The Council members of our Association, appointed as the actors of this Cause, have been working diligently to see this holy couple's journey to sainthood move forward. Henry and Inez Casolani lived extraordinary lives of devotion to their faith, each other, and their community as Augustinian tertiaries, serving as exemplary

models of Christian marriage and lay spirituality.



The process for their Beatification and Canonization is currently progressing to the Roman phase, following the conclusion of the diocesan inquiry on the 5th of July, 2024, in a solemn celebration at Santu Wistin Church in Valletta. This next stage involves

presenting their life, virtues, and reputation for holiness to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints in Rome, where the Positio document will be prepared. However, the financial demands of this phase are substantial.

The initial fees requested by the Dicastery include:

- €6,000 to open the process and submit the acts,
- €8,000 to proceed with juridical validation and the appointment of the Relator.



During the upcoming pastoral year, we shall need to raise €14,000 to cover these initial expenses for the Roman phase, excluding additional costs such as postulation and promotion.

In light of these challenges, my daughter Desiree Calleja (cellist), my son-in-law Stefan Calleja (violinist), and I (pianist) are preparing a piano trio recital on the 20th of June, 2025, to raise funds in support of this sacred cause. All donations collected during the recital will be directed toward supporting the process for the Beatification of Henry and

Inez Casolani, helping us to meet the significant expenses involved.

This cause is of immense importance to the Maltese people, marking the first time in our nation's history that a married couple who were laypersons are being considered for sainthood. With fewer than twenty causes for the canonization of married couples worldwide, the potential beatification of Henry and Inez Casolani would be a unique and blessed occasion.

May you please help us find the necessary funds to support the Causes for the Beatification and Canonization of these two remarkable Maltese personalities?



## Mel Gibson working on Great Siege of Malta TV series

The actor and director didn't commit to starring in the project, but said he would like to produce it [Times of Malta](#)

Mel Gibson said the tale of the Great Siege was an "incredible story". Photo: AFP

Mel Gibson has said he is working on a limited television series about the Great Siege of Malta. Gibson, who was in Malta earlier this month discussing a potential film project, told the publication [Movieweb.com](#) that he was working on a project about the "incredible story" of the 1565 Ottoman siege of Malta. The actor and director revealed the project after he was asked about his [trip to Malta](#), where he met Prime Minister Robert Abela.

"I'm also working on a TV limited series about the Siege of Malta, which is an incredible story, and there's only one place to film that, I mean, in Malta," Gibson told [Movieweb.com](#).

"Because that's where it happened, at these fortresses where 700 knights defended Malta against an onslaught from the Turkish and Suleiman sent 40,000 men and ships and, wow, the knights won. So, it's a pretty crazy, great story."

When asked in what capacity he would be involved in the project, Gibson said he was uncertain at this point whether he would star in the show, but said he would like to produce it himself.

"I'd like to be in it, but I don't know if I'll have the time, you know? But I certainly want to be like a producer of it, and I've worked with a very talented writer on the script, so it's going to be good for somebody. I know that it's a great story."

Gibson is currently filming the sequel to 2004's *The Passion of the Christ*, which he co-wrote, produced and directed.

The new film *Resurrection* is expected to bring together several actors from the original cast of *The Passion of Christ*, featuring Jim Caviezel and Francesco De Vito. Reports say the film will be shot in Israel, Morocco and Italy.



## AFM soldiers deployed in Lebanon as part of UN peacekeeping mission are safe: spokesperson



Armed Forces of Malta spokesperson confirms with MaltaToday that nine Maltese soldiers deployed in Lebanon as part of the UN peacekeeping Mission are safe • AFM continues to monitor situation

by Karl Azzopardi (Photo: AFM)

An Armed Forces of Malta spokesperson has confirmed with this newspaper that nine Maltese soldiers deployed in Lebanon as part of the UN peacekeeping Mission are safe.

“The Armed Forces of Malta is closely monitoring the situation and is in direct contact with the Irish Defence Forces. Although the situation is volatile, all Maltese soldiers are safe,” a spokesperson said in reply to questions by MaltaToday.

One officer and eight senior and junior non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces of Malta are currently embedded with the 124th Infantry Battalion in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) deployment in Lebanon, for a 6-month tour of peace keeping operations. The role of these personnel remains fundamentally related to peace keeping operations, and never related to any sort of fights or participation in a battlefield.

The UN has more than 10,000 peacekeeping troops deployed along the border of Lebanon with Israel and Syria in what is known as the Blue Line.

Tensions are high in Lebanon as the Israeli air force continues to strike Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. Hundreds of people were killed the on Monday in the deadliest barrage of Israeli attacks there in nearly two decades.

Wednesday brought the most explicit threat yet of a ground incursion in Lebanon. The Israeli military’s Chief of the General Staff, Herzi Halevi, told troops in the north that airstrikes in Lebanon were intended “to prepare the ground for your possible entry and to continue degrading Hezbollah.”

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not commented on the ceasefire reports carried by a number of international newsrooms.

An Israeli official told CNN on Thursday that talks over a potential temporary ceasefire with Hezbollah are a main motivator for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s trip to New York for the United Nations General Assembly.

The source said it was notable that Netanyahu, who is currently flying to New York, has not denied reports that the US is pushing for a 21-day ceasefire.

The source added that the main reason for Netanyahu’s trip is these diplomatic talks, and the message in Israel’s briefings yesterday was that “Israel favours a diplomatic solution.”



## Santa Venera care home Dar Apap to shut down after 80 years

[Claudia Calleja](#)

The Apap Institute home for the elderly in Santa Venera will be

shutting down by end of year. Photo: Curia

A Santa Venera church-run elderly home which has been in operation for nearly 80 years will be shutting down by the end of the year as the nuns who run it can no longer cope.

“The Dominican Sisters took the difficult decision to relinquish the running of the Apap Institute care home in Santa Venera — which accommodates 30 elderly residents — due to the declining number of religious vocations and the substantial investment required to refurbish the 80-year-old building,” the Curia said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Archdiocese of Malta will be assisting the Dominican Sisters with the relocation of residents to church and state-run homes and seeking alternative employment for the nine full-time and four part-time staff members.

“The Archdiocese will absorb as many residents and employees as possible into its own structures and has already been in contact with the government about alternatives for those that cannot be accommodated,” a spokesperson said.

The Apap Institute, which forms part of the Dominican Sisters’ Convent in Santa Venera, was established as a home for the elderly after World War II, in line with the Sisters’ mission to care for children, the elderly and the sick.

The Director of the Homes for the Elderly of the Church, André Vassallo Grant, said: “Although the Apap Institute is owned by the Archdiocese, the administration of the home and daily care for residents have always been provided by the Dominican Sisters.

“The sad reality is they can no longer continue offering this service, and we have pledged our full support to the Mother Provincial to find solutions for those affected.”


One concerned relative who reached out to *Times of Malta*, said she was disappointed by this decision.

“There are many possible options that could keep the home running and avoid this traumatic circumstance for the vulnerable residents,” she said.

“These are elderly with various problems for whom finding an alternative residence could be difficult, financially prohibitive, and most certainly distressing. One such option could involve partnership with the government or other entities that provide care for the elderly.”

## CLERGY CARE TO GET GREATER ATTENTION WITH NEW ACBC COMMITTEE



 **Mark Buhagiar**  
Director  
Office for Clergy Health and Wellbeing

### Dr Mark Buhagiar, head of Clergy Health and Wellbeing, at the Diocese of Parramatta

By Antony Lawes

The head of a team that looks after the welfare of serving and retired clergy in the Diocese has been appointed to lead a new national committee that aims to improve the standard of clergy care around the country.

Dr Mark Buhagiar, the head of Clergy Health and Wellbeing in the Diocese of Parramatta, has been elected chair of the National Network of Clergy Care Coordinators, a committee of the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry, which is part of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It

held its first meeting at the beginning of September.

According to its draft terms of reference, the committee will work towards “the spiritual, physical, psychological, social and emotional flourishing of the clergy”, and it will do this by fostering collaboration and developing resources and information that can be shared between dioceses. Dr Buhagiar said the committee grew out of a loose network of clergy care coordinators



around Australia in 2008, who would get together every year to swap stories and hear from external speakers. But over time they realised that they needed a more formal structure to better support each other and to help dioceses that didn't have the same resources to look after their priests.

*Retired Diocese of Parramatta priest Fr Arthur Cook (right) with Head of Clergy Health and Wellbeing, Mark Buhagiar. Image: Diocese of Parramatta*

“It's a fairly unique role that we have

because we have a health background but we're doing a lot of the social side of things as well,” he said. “We also have to understand the structure of the Church.

“When people say ‘what's your job?’ I go, ‘well yesterday I spent the day as a removalist and today I fixed a computer problem in the morning, and I have to go and accompany someone to a specialist appointment in the afternoon.’” He said his priorities during his term as chair of the committee would firstly be to focus on the delivery of care to clergy by improving the information and resources available on all aspects of clergy care, so that any diocese could access specific information – such as how to help priests after returning from hospital, or maintaining healthy lifestyles, or planning different care options for older age. This would hopefully plug any gaps that exist.

His second priority would be to investigate how care is provided for those in religious orders who often live and work in a diocese but whose care is the responsibility of their religious order. This could result in partnerships of care, especially with religious orders that have few members



left in Australia, but may also enhance the network of people providing care to clergy and religious across Australia.

“We don’t have a great awareness of how [religious orders] do that [care for their members]. We don’t have awareness of who’s involved in the care and so there’s an opportunity for us to work with them more closely,” Dr Buhagiar said.

The third priority for the committee was to work with the dioceses that don’t have any formal support services for their clergy and “support them to develop something”.

He said the biggest advantage of the new committee and the structures that are being put in place is that continuity of clergy care will be better supported even if an individual coordinator leaves a diocese. “If history teaches us anything it’s that if you rely on one person and that person leaves then everything stops,” Dr Buhagiar said. “You’ve got to have it built into the structure of the place that this care continues on no matter who’s in the role.”

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## **Maltese honeybee declared national insect**



Malta has officially declared the Maltese honeybee (*Apis mellifera ruttneri*) as the country’s National Insect, joining five other national species.

This unique honeybee, known locally as “in-naħla ta’ Malta,” evolved in isolation on the Maltese Islands and is perfectly adapted to the local hot, dry summers.

Honeybees play a vital role in agriculture and biodiversity, providing essential services like pollination and producing honey, beeswax, and other valuable products.

With this new designation, the Maltese honeybee will receive stronger legal protection and greater public awareness about its importance for pollination and environmental health.

Minister for the Environment, Miriam Dalli, remarked: “This declaration is a proud moment for Malta. The Maltese honeybee is a symbol of our natural heritage and a key player in sustaining both our environment and agriculture.”

Minister for Agriculture, Anton Refalo stated that this is another milestone which compliments the work of the Government in the preservation of local genetic resources and the valorisation of agriculture products.

This initiative aligns with ongoing efforts by the Ministries and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) to promote biodiversity monitoring and conservation, including initiatives like the Malta Pollinator Monitoring Scheme, supported by volunteers and citizen scientists.

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We congratulate ANDREW GATT for being elected as Vice President of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria after serving 9 years as Secretary. His original connection with the Maltese Community Council was in 2013 when Victor Borg who was the President at that time asked him to represent the council in the Anti-Gambling campaign which he did and later was asked to join the Council and was elected as Secretary for the Executive in 2015. Andrew held the position of secretary up to the recent MCCV Executive election held September 2024 at which time Andrew was elected to the position of Vice President. His connection with the Parkville Centre goes a long way.

Andrew was a soccer player with the George Cross in the early 60s when they used to play at Parkville.

## Merħba to the Maltese American Community Club of Dearborn



Make the Club your Friday Night Dinner Plans

The MACC of Dearborn hosts dinner every Friday with a limited menu. The bar is open during this time, serving a wide selection of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages including *Kinnie*. Please see rotating weekly menu below by expanding "Event Details."

We have things to entertain all ages! The MACC of Dearborn has a pool table, arcade games, multiple TVs, playing cards, coloring books, and a variety of board games available. **Prices are reduced for members. Apply to join!**

[club](#)

5:30pm y till Approx. 8:30pm Doors open at 5:00pm

### 1st Friday Dinner Menu

**Imqarrun (traditional Maltese baked macaroni) Ross il-Forn (traditional Maltese baked rice)**  
Baked or hand-battered cod dinner with sides (vary...)

### 2nd Friday Dinner Menu

**Hobz Biz-Zejt (traditional Maltese tuna sandwich)**

Baked or hand-battered cod dinner with sides (varying weekly) Cheese Ravioli with tomato sau...

### 3rd Friday Dinner Menu

**Chef's Choice Entree:** *check our [Facebook](#) for details or contact the club*

Baked or hand-battered cod dinner with sides (varying weekly) Cheese ...

### 4th Friday Dinner Menu

**Chef's Choice Entree:** *check our [Facebook](#) for details or contact the club*

Baked or hand-battered cod dinner with sides Cheese Ravioli with tom...



## Science in the City Festival has been building bridges between researchers, artists and the community for over a decade

The Festival is part of the European Researchers' Night which takes place on the same night/s <sup>[1]</sup> in over 300 cities across Europe.

With over 30,000 visitors every year and 20,000 views in the online festival, it is a fantastic opportunity for scientists, artists and citizens to collaborate and get creative. The festival occurs in multiple forms but has the same goal, that of engaging the community with science and creativity, giving a platform to local people to share their perspective and advocate for positive change.

Science in the City is Malta's national science and arts festival. This year, the festival was held on the 27–28th September. It provided a unique platform for the community, scientists, researchers, artists and performers to engage with one another and advocate for positive change through active citizenship and critical thinking.

The Festival celebrated the creativity and innovation of artists and scientists and presents how their work continues to improve our everyday lives. Science in the City promoted J.E.D.I., empowering the community to strive for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, while increasing the number of students opting for STEAM careers.

SitC dates back to 2012, it has been growing in scale and vision ever since. The number of attendees has more than doubled from 12,000 in 2012 to over 30,000 by 2023 — reaching over 6% of the total population of the Maltese Islands. The number of activities has more than tripled with several international acts, as has the number of partners, researchers and volunteers involved, with over 90 organisations, 80 researchers and 600 volunteers involved.

Each year the organisers aim to widen participation across all parts of society in order to inspire more people to be empowered by research, this makes our festival more diverse and representative of our communities.

**Is-Sibt**  
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**Bażilika**  
**Minuri ta'**  
**Kristu Re**  
**Raħal il-Ġdid**

## Early lace making in Malta

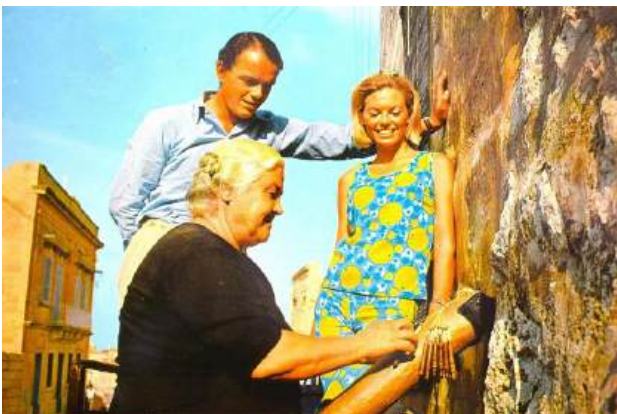


Used by ladies to adorn themselves since at least the 17th century, Maltese lace flourished again when Queen Victoria started wearing i



An early 1900s postcard showing lace making, published by Malta Captain. Photo: Richard Ellis  
The origins of lace making in Malta have, so far, not been accurately documented. Through notarial inventories, dowry contacts and painted portraits we know that both knights and ladies adorned themselves with lace since the *seicento*. Artists Favray and Zahra made fine lace their signature fingerprint in portraits.

Post-war publishers like the ABC Library kept up the uninterrupted tradition of lace makers' postcards.



Probably the earliest postcard of a lace maker in colour, by Cesare Bornaccini

The more generally accepted origin of Maltese lace claims a Genoese DNA. I am not that sure. Usually, the vernacular word for an object gives away its origin. A North Italian etymology would have derivatives of *merletto* or *trina* while Maltese *bizzilla* hints to a Sicilian derivation – *pizzu, pizzuteddu*.

Maltese lace flourished again when Queen Victoria started wearing it after ordering an inordinate number of mitts and a scarf from the island.

**Thanks for your donation**

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Giuseppe Valenti modelled the sovereign wearing a Malta lace shawl in her 1891 monument in Pjazza Reġina. Most postcard publishers included images of lace makers. Rightly so, as Malta lace had established a presence in the islands' folklore. I am showing a random selection across time. My grandfather, Giovanni, an early publisher, followed the



trend. Thereby hangs a tale.

Colour postcard of lace making published by John Critien.

This charming pre-WWI Gozitan postcard may be the work of the publisher Mikiel Farrugia.



Vincenzo Galea, a prolific postcard publisher, issued this in the early 1900s.

He hired a photographer, a studio with the right props and costumes and a girl to pose as a lace maker.

A sophisticated lace maker printed in blue, issued in the 1920s by Giuseppe Grech Mifsud.

A 1930s card by graphic designer Alfred Gerada who signed his commercial work Apelles.

The model failed to turn up and grandpa panicked at the thought of all those fruitless costs. He commandeered my reluctant father, Vincenzo, a beardless lad, into standing in for her.

Lace making in the Maltese countryside in the 1930s

My bemused father told me this story but, for long, I could not acquire an image of the unwilling transvestite.

I finally managed to find the postcard through a foreign internet dealer. It was father! On the back someone had handwritten: *Vincenzo Bonello nel 1905!*

The author's grandfather issued this postcard in which the sitter is the author's father.

All photos from the author's collection.



## Early beach fashions in Malta

You can date post-war Maltese postcards by measuring how skimpy the bikinis are [Giovanni Bonello](#) Swimmers in the early 1930s.

I have been postponing, over and over again, my response to the request by a reader for pictorial spreads about beach fashions in early Malta because I believed it a difficult commitment to satisfy.

Differently from today, not a single one of the hundreds of pre-war postcards shows swimmers on beaches. Paying humble homage to Victorian prudery, card publishers banned that subject as entirely taboo, and public photographers too. Postcard used in Malta in 1902 showing a lady in a contemporary bathing costume Adults, especially women, in bathing costumes, may appear, but very exceptionally, in private family albums.



arresting a boy swimming in the nude. Apart from that, absolutely nothing.

One 1930s photograph, showing women in the most chaste of swimming gear, has a note handwritten on its back: "I don't think this should be in the album."

The only pre-war bathing scene postcard, c.1905, showing policemen arresting a boy swimming starkers.

Curiously, the only postcard I know of which shows a bathing scene was most likely meant as a morality warning. Published round 1905, it shows policemen



Three ladies enjoying the sea around Malta. Women in swimwear start appearing, timidly at first, aggressively later, with the explosion of the tourist boom that followed Independence. You can date post-war Maltese postcards rather accurately, by measuring how skimpy the bikinis are.

In an island surrounded by vast expanses of sea and espoused to tropical heatwaves, one would assume sea bathing to have been ingrained in popular culture.

If it was, it left very faint records in history. Apart from Toni Bajjada, whose marathon swims during the 1565 Great Siege became the stuff of legend, almost no mention of sea leisure, games or sports appears anywhere in our annals before the 20th century.

St Julian's Water Polo Club team in 1931

Winners of the British 1910 military water sports championships.



Maltese sportsmen participated for the first time in the Olympic Games of Amsterdam in 1928.

Malta had to wait till 1928 to send its first water polo team to the Amsterdam Olympic Games which, coincidentally, featured my mother's brother, Edoardo Magri, later judge.

*All images from the author's collections*

## Ġużeppi Muscat ‘ Gużu Tal-Beżuża’, one of Malta’s last remaining herdsman, passes away



Known as Ġużu tal-Beżuża, Ġużeppi was known for taking his sheep and goats out to graze on Dingli Cliffs and making fresh cheeselets from their milk

by **Karl Azzopardi**

**maltatoday.com.mt**

Ġużeppi Muscat ‘Tal- Beżuża’, one of Malta’s last herdsman, sadly passed away on Sunday. Known for taking his herd of sheep to Dingli Cliffs to graze, Ġużeppi was an icon in the rural village. Still working last week, he was among the islands’ last remaining traditional shepherds/ “This is my work but it’s also a passion. I come here every day to feed and milk the sheep and goats. I love these animals. Here, on the Dingli cliffs, it’s peaceful and quiet. I wouldn’t change this for anything else in the world. As a young boy, I was always running after my father while he tended to the animals. And then it was my turn,” he had said in an [interview](#) with website A Maltese Pantry in 2020. He had explained how he would milk his goats every day.

“All of them recognize me. They aren’t scared when I approach them,” he had said, explaining his love for his trip.

Ġużeppi had also discussed what would happen to his beloved goats should he die.

“Well, there’s nobody left. And if today was my last day on Earth, they would sell them straight away, even before they bury me. My children won’t do this work because it’s not enough. When my father stopped working here, it was a harsh blow for him. He passed away four years after. Nowadays, I regret having told him to stop. I hope that my children won’t do the same. If I were born again, I would lead the same life. I wouldn’t change a thing,” he had said.

Deputy Prime Minister Ian Borg, who is from Dingli, also paid tribute to Muscat.

“Had-Dingli and the cliffs won’t be the same without you. Rest in peace my friend,” Borg said on Facebook.





Bishop Tomas Gargallo (1578-1614)  
Wikipedia

## Parish churches in Malta and Gozo from 1436 to 1798 – part 1

Dedicated to our ancestors

By Tony Mamo

In 1436 Senatore de Mello, the Bishop of Malta who resided in Sicily, visited Malta and appointed a commission of cathedral canons to prepare an inventory of the property and income of the church. This inventory which is known as the “Rollo de Mello” identified ten rural parishes - Birkirkara, Mellieħa, Naxxar, Hal Qormi, [Is-Sigġiewi](#), Iż-Żejtun, Iż-Żurrieq, Ғaž-Żebbuġ, Hal Tartarni (Dingli), and Gudja. In addition, Birgu, Mdina (Malta’s old capital city) and Rabat (Gozo) had their own parish churches.

A century after Mello’s visit, two great events occurred which transformed Malta. In 1530 the Emperor Charles V granted Malta to the Knights of St John. In 1565 an Ottoman army of some 30,000 soldiers landed in Malta to deliver a final blow to their arch enemy - the Knights. Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, the Knights and the Maltese under Grandmaster La Valette repelled the Ottomans.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, 24 new parishes were established in Malta and Gozo:

(1) Madonna tal-Porto Salvo also known as San Duminku, il-belt (1571), (2) San Pawl Nawfragu, il-belt (1577), (3) Sidtna Marija ta’ Damasku (Tal-Griegi), il-Birgu (1575), (4) Tluġħ tal-Verġni Marija fis-Sema, H’ Attard (1575), (5) [Marija Bambina](#), L’isla (1581), (6) Tnissil bla Tebġħa tal-Verġni Marija, Bormla (1586), (7) [San Leonardu Abbati](#), Hal-Kirkop (1592), (8) Marija Annunzjata, Hal Tarxien (1592), Trasfigurazzjoni (Kristu Salvatur), Lija (1594), (9) Santa Marija, L’Imqabba (1598), (10) [Konverżjoni ta’ San Pawl](#), Ғal Safi (1598),

(11) Santa Marija, il-Mosta (1608), (12) [San Bartilmew](#), Ғal Għargħur (1610), (13) Santa Marija, Ғad-Dingli (1615), (14) Madonna tal-Grazzja, Ғaž-Żabbar (1616), (15) Santa Marija, Qrendi (1618), (16) Santa Marija, Hal Ghaxaq (1626), (17) Sant Andrija, Hal Luqa (1634), (18) Il-Lunzjata, Hal Balzan (1655), (19) San Gwann il-Battista, Xewkija, Gozo (1678), (20) Viżitazzjoni tal-Madonna lil Santa Elizabetta, Għarb, Gozo (1679), (21) Marija Bambina, Xaghra, Gozo (1688), (22) Santa Marija Assunta, Żebbuġ, Gozo (1688), (23) San Pietru u San Pawl, Nadur, Gozo (1688), and (24) Santa Margerita, V.M., Sannat, Gozo (1688).

Bishop Tomas Gargallo (1578-1614) established 9 of these parishes while Bishop Baldassare Cagliares (1614–1633) and Bishop Davide Cocco Palmieri (1684–1711) established 4 parishes each. No new parishes were established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Let us image the conditions in Malta over the centuries. In 1436, Malta was part of the Aragonese (Spanish) Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. Our ancestors were mainly peasants and life was very hard. Wheat was imported from Sicily as Malta did not grow enough wheat. Ships sailing from Mediterranean ports brought the plague and contagious diseases to Malta. Houses were unhygienic and overcrowded with animals and people sharing the limited space. Only the wealthy families lived in stone houses. Pirates frequently raided our poorly defended islands in search of spoils and slaves. Given these conditions the estimated population was 10,000 in 1420, mortality rate was high and life expectancy was short.



Kappella ta' Santa Marija, Bir-Miftuħ,  
limits of Gudja. (Wikipedia)

After the Great Siege of 1565 the Knights embarked on a massive building program including the construction of Valletta, the new capital city, the Cottonera Lines, coastal watchtowers, etc. In addition, they supported local industry like the spinning and weaving of cotton, farming particularly wheat and cotton, ship building and commerce. The grandmasters were despotic but generally benevolent rulers. To maintain social harmony, the Knights subsidised the price of bread, the staple food of the population.

As conditions improved, the population increased to about 70,000 by 1700 and to about 100,000 by 1798 despite the recurrence of the plague and diseases. Existing villages were expanded and new ones were established, each with its own parish church dedicated to a patron saint. Wealthy families and the church donated land and money towards the building of these parish churches while the villagers provided manual labour. In 1575 the Apostolic Visitor, Mons Pietro Dusina visited Malta to examine the state of the church. In his detailed report Dusina wrote about the state of disrepair and lack of cleanliness of some churches, the attire of some priests during church services, and the low education standards of some clergy.

How did the Knights manage to fund all these activities in Malta? The Knights had four main sources of income: donations from other states and the Pope, surpluses from their large property holdings in Europe, local taxes and prize money from the capture of Ottoman ships. The foreign bishops of Malta also transferred their residency from Sicily to Malta.

The parish church was the hub of village life. The tolling of church bells marked the beginning and end of the working day. After Sunday mass the villagers gathered in front of the church to gossip. The parish priest was often the only literate person and the villagers turned to him for advice. Some clerics were so poor that they had to do other work to make both ends met. Basic education to the village children was provided sometimes by priests and the friar orders. The villagers spoke some form of Maltese (the Maltese language had not yet been standardised) while the knights, the church and the professional classes used Italian. The maritime activities (shipbuilding and repair, trade etc) encouraged many villagers to move to the harbour towns in search of a better life.

Some parish churches also had confraternities (fratellanza) “mostly dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Rosary”. These lay societies participated in the village festa and provided support to their members in times of need and helped people in need. The villagers looked forward to their village festa to take a break from their monotonous working life. In the 18th century the religious celebrations of the village/town patron saint were confined to “internal liturgical celebrations”, and some “minor illumination” like bonfires, and small mortars. Pietru Pawl Catagna (1827 – 1907), the Maltese historian, wrote that in 1777, Grandmaster de Rohan had encouraged the population to celebrate the internal and external festivities with greater pomp.



The Carmelite Church in Mdina, where the insurrection against the French started. (Wikipedia)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Knights lost their relevance as a military power in modern Europe. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Knights’ treasury was almost empty following the confiscation of their substantial estates in France by the Revolutionary Government.

In 1798, a French expeditionary force led by General Napoleon Bonaparte, on its way to Egypt, took control of Malta. The Knights’ rule in Malta had come to an end. The French occupation was short-lived, however, because the inhabitants of the villages, soon rose against the French forces.

**PART 2 – NEXT EDITION**



Grandmaster Antoine de Paule founded Casal Paola in 1626 (Wikipedia)

# Maltese Minestra

## Our wonderful vegetable soup!

Our wonderful vegetable soup is different to our nearby Italian version in that it has more vegetables. A great soup for the Easter period.

Soup and more soup. Our house was constantly smelling of different soups over the Winter when I was growing up and all of these were mainly Maltese soups. Our vegetable minestra was a common soup made in our house and most of my other families homes during the Winter. Our families used to grow so many Winter crops in Australia and Malta which made it common sense to always cook this soup. It was perfect for when my parents would come from the farm in the evening. My mum used to just have to quickly go home while she was working on the farm and prepare the soup. She could leave then simmering ready for when they were finished. We grew almost everything on the farm for this soup and if we didn't our family who all lived close by had something which was missing. Otherwise, my dad always brought home vegetables that we may not have had from the fruit and vegetable market in Sydney. They always went into the soup too.

I think the main difference with this soup and Italian minestra is that we do not traditionally put peas or green beans in. Some people still do however and no one is stopping you.

Enjoy on its own or even with some crusty bread and preferably Maltese if you can get it. The potatoes, pasta and lentils provide enough carbohydrates though.

Our Minestra is full of vegetables, pasta and as an option you can also add lentils. A great choice in the Winter months and during the Easter period.

Ministra Tal-Haxix – Maltese Vegetable Soup

### Ingredients:

- 2 marrows
- 4 potatoes
- 2 onions
- 400g pumpkin
- 1 small cabbage
- 1 small cauliflower
- 2 turnips
- 2 tomatoes
- 2 carrots
- 1 teaspoon tomato puree'
- 200g pasta ( small shaped)
- 750ml of water

### Method:

**Chop** all the vegetables and place them in a pot. Add 750ml of water, tomato puree' and season. Bring to boil and let simmer until vegetables are tender. Add a spoonful





**LA VALETTE**  
**1964 2024**

**AN EVENING OF RECOGNITION**

**SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2024**

Our night includes  
 Nostalgic Photo Slideshow  
 Acknowledgment of past committee, volunteers and supporters  
 Live Music and Dancing  
 Maltese Concert Band  
 Ghana folkloric singing and Joe Apap  
 Delicious 3 Course Meal

**SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2024**  
**CELEBRATION MASS 5.00pm**  
**ST FRANCIS CHAPEL**  
**FUNCTION 7:00pm (Doors open 6.30pm)**  
**LA VALETTE SOCIAL CENTRE**  
**175 WALTERS RD BLACKTOWN**  
**DRESS: Formal**  
**TICKETS:**  
**MEMBERS \$55 · NON-MEMBERS: \$60**  
CHILDREN u12 \$30  
**TO BOOK VISIT [lavalette.com.au](http://lavalette.com.au)**  
**or CALL**  
**ANTOINETTE 0405 249 576**



**Maltese Center at Astoria New York**  
**SUNDAY**

**OCTOBER 13TH 2024 1:30PM**  
**NOVEMBER 10TH 2024 1:30PM**  
**DECEMBER 8TH 2024 1:30PM**

**COME, BRING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR AN AFTERNOON OF FUN!**

**Bingo will be held in the Lower Hall of the Maltese Center. Coffee and Cake will be served.**

Pauline Zammit - 917 617-9936  
 Rita Bajada - 718 757-7173



**Children Christmas Party**  
 organised by the  
**MALTESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF VICTORIA**

FEATURING  
 GAMES, MUSIC, ACTIVITIES & OF COURSE SANTA

When: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2024  
 Where: Maltese Community Centre  
 477 Royal Parade Parkville  
 Time: 1:00pm to 4:00pm  
 Cost: \$15 per person.



Children under 12-year-old free

**A SMALL GIFT WRAPPED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME & SURNAME WHICH SANTA WILL GIVE TO YOUR CHILD**

Refreshments and finger food included in the price



For Booking, please visit  
<https://www.trybooking.com/>  
 call the Centre on 9387 8922

**RSVP BY MONDAY 23<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**