

THE MALTESE WELLINGTONIAN



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE
MALTESE ASSOCIATION OF WELLINGTON AND THE
MEMBERS OF THE FRIENDS OF MALTA SOCIETY

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Greetings everyone!

We have had quite a busy time these past 2 months and it is reflected in this edition. We have had the pleasure of attending the celebration of Commonwealth Day on the 8th of March and also of catching up with our friends from the Gold Coast who were holidaying in New Zealand. Some photos will be reproduced here in.

We have unfortunately had to cancel our Easter activity because the Valentines Restaurant is closed for renovation. I am certain we will organize another activity in the near future. We are now keeping in stock Maltese Sausages for whoever wishes to test his taste buds with this Maltese delicacy.

In this edition we have plenty of interesting articles amongst them about Malta's first saint San Gorg Preca whose feast is celebrated in June and also article about the Convention for Maltese Community Leaders Abroad held in 2000 and also about the most recent one held in March.

From our next edition we are going to start reproducing small articles of old Maltese games and rhymes in Maltese.

We thank all those whose support is ongoing.

The Editor: Anthony Micallef

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Where Does the Maltese Language come from?

Ancient Phoenicians - Around 700 BC Malta was inhabited by the Ancient Phoenicians, who were particularly interested in the use of the various harbours and ports around the Maltese islands that were easily accessible.

Within around two hundred years (500 BC) Malta had become a Punic colony and Phoenician traces are still found today in Maltese culture, traditions and language.

Phoenicians of Malta and their Language.

A genetic study of modern Maltese paves that half of them carry Phoenician genetic identifiers and their language seems to be very close to the Lebanese language.

The National Geographic Study & Origin of the Maltese

The National Geographic study, discussed elsewhere in this site, made some remarkable discoveries regarding the ethnic origin of the Maltese people. Science and genetics came to prove what history could not make certain. Despite the claims that upon the Arab occupation of Malta it was vacated of ALL its inhabitants around the year AD 869, carrying 'one and all' into slavery and leaving no Punic or Latin survivors behind, genetics prove this to be untrue. The National Geographic study indicates that more than half of the Y chromosome lineages in today's Maltese population came in with the Phoenicians, and there is a very close genetic relationship between the Maltese and the Lebanese Phoenicians.

The Maltese Language -- L-ilsien Malti

Maltese is a Semitic tongue but a unique one among Semitic languages. It is written in the Latin

alphabet. Special characters are added to accommodate Semitic sounds that are not available in Latin characters. Further, the Maltese language of today contains many Romance language terms because of the influence of European presence in Malta over centuries.

The 29 letters of the Maltese Alphabet

Maltese has glottal sound for the letter "Q"

which resembles neither the Arabic, nor the European sounds for its equivalent (which are more akin to our 'k' sound), but is rather like the sound produced by a 'silent cough'. The same is present in Syrian and Aramaic, the language of Christ. There continues to be a controversy whether modern Maltese language should be considered a direct descendant of the "Punic" tongue. Punic is the Latin name for Phoenician of the western Mediterranean.

Artifacts found in Malta, inscribed in both Carthaginian and Classic Greek, the Cippus indicated that the Punic language was spoken by inhabitants of the island. This made it possible for French scholar, Abbe Barthelemy, to decipher and reconstruct the Carthaginian (Phoenician) alphabet. Here is a translation of the said inscription:

*To our Lord Melqart, Lord of Tyre
Abdasar and his brother Aserkemor,
sons of Asirxehor, son of Abdasar,
made this vow [a solemn promise/gift]
for hearing their prayer and blessing them.*

The main problem with the Punic tongue is that nowadays it is a 'dead language' to which no one really knows the true pronunciation of the written text. Reference has been made by Quintinus to passages from Plautus' play Poenulus, containing words in this ancient 'Carthaginian' form of speech, but it is merely an intelligent guess how well Punic pronunciation resembled modern Semitic languages. Words from the Bible, such as



Ephtha (open up!) and Cumi (wake up/arise!) were cited by Quintinus as if to corroborate the kinship between the spoken-Maltese he heard during his stay at Malta in 1536 and the Aramaic vernacular thought to have been its origin.

Many scholars of the Maltese language are of the opinion that modern Maltese originated from Arabic, rather than Punic, and goes back to circa 1050 AD. Others do not entertain the hypothesis that the entire Punic origin has been wiped out of the language. This is so especially since both are Semitic tongues and it would be very likely to obscure one beneath the other; the older beneath the new, the 'dead' Punic beneath the 'surviving' Arabic. The subsequent Romantic overlay that followed gave Maltese its unique Mediterranean character.

Maltese of today is analogous to the Lebanese language. The eastern Mediterranean language group is exactly what Maltese developed into. Aramaic (along side Greek) was the *langue franca* of the whole eastern Mediterranean at the dawn of the Arab conquest. Further, the number of invading Arabs was relatively small as compared with the local populations of their dominions. The very nature of the number of invaders as opposed to the local populations resulted with an amalgam of spoken tongues that contained high percentages of local usages. For example, upon analyzing spoken Lebanese, many Phoenician, Aramaic, Syrian, in addition to Turkish and other languages come through as ones overlaid with Arabic. In fact, the Arabs and their cohorts of the 11th century did not speak any formal or classical Arabic but another amalgam of dialects mixed in with Arabic. It is very likely that most of the so-called Arabs of North Africa were a mix of Punic, Berber and Roman blood, much like their mother tongues.

Based on these facts and the unreliable claim that all the Maltese were wiped off their islands, one can conclude that the Maltese language of today continues to have a strong influence of Punic Phoenician. Attributing the roots of Maltese

words exclusively to Arabic is wrong especially since both Phoenician and Arabic have the same Semitic word roots and it is impossible to conclude that a Maltese word that sounds like a similar Arabic word necessarily comes from Arabic and not from Phoenician. Jumping to such conclusions is very common today specifically because Arabic is well known and Phoenician or Punic is virtually unknown by philologists and linguists.

The Maltese speak a language with ancient roots. The language goes back to the beginning of Maltese history, including Punic times. Malta had formed part of the Carthaginian empire and changed hands a number of times during the Punic Wars (264-146 BC) before becoming Roman "civitas foederata" in 218 BC. During Roman times the Maltese continued to speak Punic. However, it has to be said that Punic inscriptions in Malta stop in the 1st century AD.

In Acts, the inhabitants of Malta were called "barbaroi" meaning that they did not speak a civilized tongue—Latin or Greek but Punic. Evidently, implying that Malta was still pristinely Semitic in A.D. 60, despite some 280 years of Roman rule. The Phoenician colonies were left speaking Phoenician (Punic) even when Phoenicia had stopped using it. In fact, Phoenician Punic continued to be spoken in Carthage and the former Punic territories until the 5th century. Saint Augustine, doctor of the Church and Bishop of Hippo (near Carthage) testified to that in his writings and called the Punic language "our own tongue".

This fact alone, recorded both in Quintinus' *Insulae Melitae descriptio* (see Horatio C.R.Vella -- *The Earliest Description of Malta*; Lyons 1536 -- 1980) as well as the later account of Kircher's 1637 visit to Malta as given in *Mundus subterraneus* (see J. Zammit Ciantar -- *A Benedictine's Notes on Seventeenth-Century MALTA* -- 1998), may render it plausible to believe that at least some of the original Punic tongue may have survived.

Parliament apologises to Maltese child migrants



en an education and a good future, Dr Gonzi said. He also recalled how two years ago he inaugurated a monument to the child migrants at the Valletta Waterfront, from where many of the children departed Malta.

The 310 Maltese child migrants were sent to Australia through the efforts of Maltese political and ecclesiastical authorities, with the consent of parents or guardians. It later emerged that

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Opposition leader Joseph Muscat this evening apologised to 315 Maltese child migrants for the suffering many of them endured after they migrated to Australia between 1950 and 1965.

The apology was issued during a statement in Parliament ahead of the Convention of the Maltese who live abroad, which opens in Malta on Sunday.

“As a mature society, we recognise that despite good intentions, there were many of these child migrants who underwent hardship. The government feels this is an appropriate moment for Parliament to apologise for the hardship which these Maltese brethren endured. We also wish to assure them of our respect for their achievements, and we rejoice at their successes,” Dr Gonzi said.

He explained that at that time, Malta was still a colony going through hard times after emerging from the war. Young children (from Malta and other countries) had been transferred to Australia under a scheme launched by the Australian government.

The intentions were good since the purpose of the scheme was for the children to be giv-

they were forced to work in institutions and many were not educated. A number of them suffered physical and sexual abuse.

The governments of Australia and the UK, among others, have also apologised for the distress caused to the children.

In his statement, Dr Gonzi reiterated the government’s commitment to support efforts by Maltese living abroad to promote Maltese language and culture. He said that during the convention, the government would announce measures with this purpose in mind.

He also listed initiatives taken to help Maltese emigrants, including the introduction of dual citizenship which had benefited 16,000 Maltese emigrants.

Opposition leader Joseph Muscat said the Opposition joined the government in the apology, even if the hardship called to the emigrants was not intentional.

He also stressed that the government should make every effort to help Maltese emigrants to promote Maltese language and culture abroad.

A view from the sky

...Maltese Dockyard workers had already built planes for the British Military between 1918 and 1920.

In 1918, when Felixstowe planes were built at Kalafrana (Marsaxlokk) by Maltese workers for the British Military, we did not even have an airport. Those planes were Flying Boats and they took off from the sea – they were submarine hunters in World War I. In 1947, some Maltese people decided to try and establish a passenger commercial airline with old warplanes. In February 1947 they started operating scheduled flights with a six-seater Consul aircraft with the name Air Malta Ltd painted on it.

About a year later they also introduced the slightly bigger De Havilland Dove aircraft and one of them was named City of Valletta. That aircraft once made an emergency landing on a beach in Ajaccio (France). Nobody was hurt...

Early in 1951 Air Malta lost its permit to operate scheduled flights and The Malta Airlines replaced them, in conjunction with BEA (the forerunner of British Airways). ...Unfortunately The Malta Airlines waited too long to expand – and they did not even produce one Maltese pilot; instead they relied on the BEA pilots and BEA aircraft – so they were challenged.

The first Maltese airline to offer training to Maltese pilots was Malta-Gozo Air Services (1968). ...The Islander was the first ever aircraft to be registered with the Malta prefix 9H – AAB. (In 1947 the Consul of Air Malta was registered with the prefix G – the British registration). Unfortunately, somebody again waited too long, and as Malta-Gozo Air Services were never given the official permit to land in Gozo (the aircraft did not even need an airport because it could land also on a road) the airline closed down and the aircraft was sold in the UK. It is still flying today, 41 years later, and the Armed Forces of Malta are still flying an identical aircraft.

Then came Air Melita – an American company backed by the Bank of California. ...Air Melita had big plans for Malta. They promised to operate a daily direct flight from New York to Malta making our island a Mediterranean hub. This was like striking gold or oil. Once again somebody waited too long. Air Melita were even taken to Court to revoke their eligibility to operate flights from Malta. The proceedings dragged on for quite a while until Mr Dom Mintoff was elected as Prime Minister and he preferred to open a Maltese national airline. Air Melita had to discharge all the Maltese workers on their books, pack up and go home, without having flown a single flight. In 1973 even The Malta Airlines were closed down to make way for the second Air Malta, as we know it today.

On 1 May 1973 Air Malta took over all the employees of The Malta Airlines and Malta Aviation Services (airport ground employees) and started operating scheduled flights to Rome and Tripoli with the new Maltese prefix code KM. Mintoff was a very impatient man and so initially he extended the aircraft lease with BEA on their ultra modern and fastest jet passenger aircraft in the world – the Trident Three. A few months later he was offered a very good deal from Pakistan, and a long lease agreement was signed for two old Boeing 720 aircraft. These aircraft started flying with the new Maltese colours on 1 April 1974, and PIA got most of the credit. Unfortunately those aircraft proved to be a financial ‘noose’ around Air Malta’s neck. They were very ‘safe’ but also very expensive to fly, but Air Malta flew them, and for the first time in history it also trained its first Maltese pilots and flight engineers to fly a Maltese airline...

When the new Air Malta started in 1973 we were like a very close family and we remained like that for many years. In fact Air Malta achieved a possible world record when for 20 consecutive and consistent years the company made a profit. From two old ‘leased’ Boeing aircraft Air Malta purchased eleven brand new aircraft. Among those aircraft were the ultra-modern Airbus 320 which had just been produced. Air Malta was a big success story....

Parts of the Messages from Her Majesty The Queen (Head of the Commonwealth)and the Prime Minister Mr John Key on Commonwealth Day 8th March 2010.

Advances in modern telecommunications are also having a marked economic effect on people from developing nations in the Commonwealth, helping to transform small to medium sized businesses. The internet is playing an important part in helping to nurture these fledgling markets but, as yet, it still remains an unaffordable option for too many of our Commonwealth citizens.

Progress in the fields of healthcare, manufacturing and education have for the most part, helped improve people's lives throughout the world. In the health sector, the Commonwealth has shown how collaborative schemes can successfully assist member states to fight pandemics and diseases.

In making these advances the Commonwealth recognizes that the best forms of innovation are those that unite, and help build resilient partnerships and better societies as a whole.

The Commonwealth has always believed that the best democracies are achieved through partnerships of governments, business and civil society. The Commonwealth recently confirmed its commitment to values such as tolerance, freedom and equality, all of which underpin the Commonwealth's founding pillars of democracy and development. New Zealand strongly supports these objectives for it is only through working together that the future of the people of the Commonwealth can be improved.



**Commonwealth day
at St.Paul's Cathedral
in Wellington**



**Dinner at La Casa
Pasta with the
Maltese from the
Gold Coast.**



Recommendations Adopted by the Convention 2000

General

1a. That the Government and people of Malta embrace the concept of a greater Malta to Include Maltese resident overseas.

b. That the Government of Malta should develop legislation, policies and programmes to affirm the Greater Malta concept and that all subsequent legislation should be compliant with this concept.

2. That the Ministry of Foreign Affairs establishes a Secretariat without its portfolio to represent the interest of Maltese abroad.

3. That this convention supports the initiative of the Emigrants Commission to establish a Migration Museum and its recommendations that the Maltese Government resources it appropriately.

4. That the history of migration and its impact on our national heritage be introduced as an integral part of the education curriculum at all levels.

5. that the Department of Foreign Affairs be responsible for organizing a conference in Malta for the Maltese living abroad on a four –yearly basis.

Language, Heritage and Culture.

6 a. that the Maltese Government institute a programme to enable Maltese teachers of Maltese to travel within Greater Malta to assist with the teaching of Maltese.

b. this convention urges the strengthening and continuance of existing distance learning programmes to facilitate the learning of Maltese language, Literature, history, heritage and culture by Maltese abroad.

c. that specially designed courses in Maltese language, literature, history, heritage and culture be established for the Maltese-origin visitors and other interested parties.

7a. that student exchange programmes be established, strengthened and extended.

b. that regular sponsorship or specialist speakers, performers, writers, artists, craftspeople and sportspeople to and

from Malta be planned as part of the promotion of Maltese origin talent.

c. that bursaries be established to enable students of Maltese who, live abroad to study Maltese language and culture in Malta.

8. That resources be made available for the establishment and /or extension of existing collections of Melitensia in Maltese community library overseas.

9. That publications and programmes related to Maltese literature include the works of those living overseas.

10a. that the Malta Tourism Authority make available to Maltese communities overseas a catalogue of materials produced in Malta and overseas about the Islands for the purpose of advertising Maltese culture and heritage.

b. that the Malta Tourism Authority sponsor projects put up by Maltese living overseas to promote Malta.

11. That officially recognized Maltese schools and Maltese classes outside of Malta should be regarded as an extension of the Maltese educational system for the purposes of recourse allocation.

12. That the Ministry of Culture’s “Directory of Maltese Artists” be extended to include Maltese artists living overseas.

13. that the Maltese Government establish an Institute of Maltese Language, literature, heritage, history and culture overseas.

14. That the Corporate and sector subsidise flights to Malta for students of Maltese language and culture who are living abroad.

The Elderly

15. That special arrangements be made to facilitate the entry and accommodation in Malta of elderly Maltese living overseas.

16. That Maltese language and Malta-content audio, visual, Braille and other resources are made available to Maltese elderly living abroad.

17. that the Government of Malta take steps to arrange for a portability of pensions of Maltese Living overseas in countries where this is not currently in place.

18. That Maltese communities living overseas lobby on behalf of the Maltese elderly so that they receive culturally and socially appropriate services from their local authorities.

The Electronic Media (including the Public Broadcasting Services)

19. That radio and TV services produced in Malta be extended in length, content and relevance and transmitted speedily to the Maltese abroad so that they are available to all community stations in Greater Malta.

Citizenship

20. that the convention delegates express their gratitude and whole hearted support for the latest changes enacted by the Government to amend the Maltese Citizenship Act , Cap 188. The convention urges that Dual Citizenship legislation continue to evolve so that children born before 1989 of a Maltese mother may become eligible for automatic citizenship without the need to apply for this and thus forfeiting the citizenship of their country of birth. The convention further urges that Dual Citizenship issues remain on the legislative agenda until dual citizenship becomes the right of all persons of Maltese ancestry irrespective of where they reside.

21. that the Government ensure that sufficient human resources and other support be given to the Department of Citizenship of Expatriate Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister, to the Maltese Consular Offices and to High Commissions to ensure that citizenship applications are handled expeditiously .

Religious Matters

22. That the church hierarchy of Malta and Gozo should exercise awareness of and involvement in the needs of Maltese living in Greater Malta:

- a. generating enthusiasm in the young clergy working among Maltese abroad;
- b. offering and enhancing opportunities to newly ordained priests to gain their pastoral experience for 1 or 2 years among Maltese abroad;

c. Introducing an agenda item on planning to strengthen religious guidance and support in Greater Malta during the current Synod in the Archdiocese.

Establishment by the Convention of a Federation of Maltese Abroad.

The convention has established an International Federation of Maltese Abroad with the purpose of:

- A: ensuring unity among Maltese living in various countries;
- B: following up recommendations of the convention to ensure they come to fruition;
- C: acting as an advocate and lobbyist on behalf of Maltese abroad and;
- D: Ensuring effective and regular communication among Maltese living abroad.

1: Each delegation (by country) has nominated 1 representative for the Committee of the Federation.

2: The delegates from each country are to select a Chair and a Secretary.

3: Each country represented on the Committee is to have one vote.

4: Within 6 months of the establishment of the Federation, a statement of purpose for the Federation is to be finalized.

5: The Assembled Delegates appointed the following office bearers:

Australia	Dr Stephen Gatt.
Canada	Mr. Milo Vassallo
New Zealand	Dr Carmen Dalli.
U.K.	Mr. Bernard Scerri.
U.S.A.	Mr. Frank Asphar.

6: The Federation will be open to individuals, associations, community councils, Government and para-statal organizations and other bodies or groups of Maltese overseas.

7: The Federation will be apolitical, non-profit organization based on equal opportunity principles.

8: The Federation will liaise with the Emigrants' Commission and Government agencies with responsibilities for Maltese abroad.

Convention for Maltese Living Abroad – 2010

Some Observations.

Paul Calleja

Organising an international conference could not be easy so it is important that observers and commentators treat the event with optimism and positively. That is not to say, however, that commentators should be blind to areas of preparation that appear to not function well. Constructive comments are important contributions even when, at times, they irritate the organisers. I hope these comments are seen in that light.

One area of the preparation that can be improved is the dissemination of information of information.

The official notification of the convention was, in a sense, necessarily wordy. But it should have been accompanied by a watered down, dot point list of basic information so those interested in attending needed not to waste time and effort looking for it.

The basic information I refer to, and which is essential for making a decision on the Convention's attendance, include

- When will it happen
- Where will it happen
- Why will it happen
- What assistance is offered
- What contribution I need to make
- How do I apply
- Where do I get more information

This information could have been summarised and emailed to all associations without all the embroidery of an official announcement that only serves to camouflage and distract from the truly important information.

Two very important items of information were particularly obscured by the bulk of other detail provided on the website, namely, the co-funding being offered and the contributions expected from those who attend as delegates.

The co-funding information is found in the website under REGISTRATION on the "Criteria for Co-funding" tab. Subsection b and c of Section C appears to guarantee €500 co-funding to Australian delegates. To quote

b. Those eligible will be reimbursed the sum of 1) Euro 500 if originating from Asia, Australasia and the Americas; Euro 100 if originating from a Euro-Mediterranean destinations;

c. Refund will be on the production of the ticket and boarding passes to the appropriate desk when in Malta

Assuming eligibility is totally determined by the stated criteria for co-funding as found on the website, it would follow that all will definitely receive the stated level of co-funding for the area.

But the base of the registration form has the following

The possibility of co-funding will be at the discretion of the Ministry upon application and presentation of boarding passes. Preference will be given to representatives of associations and organisations. Clearly this changes the statement in the "criteria for co-funding" section from a definite to a definite maybe.

Why should this information be so ambiguous? Are there un-stated criteria items that will influence eligibility for co-funding? The

limited revenue available to provide the co-funding should not be used to justify the ambiguity. The size of the revenue should determine the number of permitted delegates from each region to ensure that all eligible overseas delegates obtained the stated level of co-funding from their region. Cash strapped Associations from the more remote would then be better placed to decide if they could afford to send a delegate.

The last point I wish to make on co-funding is the absence of any special consideration for the most remote region that should be represented in Malta, New Zealand. The Convention is an opportunity for the Government of Malta to recognise the efforts individuals have made to Maltese communities outside of Malta. Clearly the government is unable to provide fully funded trips to Malta for all but it is not unreasonable to fully fund at least one ticket for a NZ community worker, especially if he has worked tirelessly for the last 15 years. Failure to have a NZ delegate will make a mockery of the Conventions motto "Strengthening our Unity". Unity is strengthened with effort and determination and the onus is on the Government of Malta to show the way in this regard. The absence of a NZ delegate will be a shameful blight on the Convention, particularly, if it is later discovered that fully funded tickets were offered and given to less deserving delegates.

The second item of ambiguity relates to the submission of papers by delegates.

Under the website heading Convention 2010 in the tab Information it states

Association or individuals are invited to submit papers on the themes indicated below; these should reach the contact person [Ms. Doris Zammit] as least 1 week prior to the opening of the Convention [i.e. March 8th, 2010] so that they may be circulated amongst

the participants. A 3-minute synopsis of the said paper may be presented by a representative of the Association or individual, during the pertinent working group;

It is uncertain if the delegate is expected to submit at paper on

- One of the themes
 - Several themes of his/her own choice
- or
- All of the themes.

If a 3-minute synopsis is required then the submitted paper must be a substantial piece of work. With themes not being allocated to delegates, isn't there the strong probability that there will be a gross imbalance of papers submitted on different themes. If that were to occur, some working sessions would go on forever and others will wrap up before time.

I hope, for the sake of the delegates and the smooth running of the convention, that the organising committee will be able to shed light on these points, sooner rather than later.

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Malta to join appeal against crucifixes decision

The Maltese government has asked to intervene in the hearings of the European Court of Human Rights which is considering an appeal filed by Italy against a decision to remove crucifixes from public places.



In its first decision, the Strasbourg-based court of the Council of Europe had upheld a request by a Finnish woman, Soile Lautsi,

for the removal of crucifixes in a school attended by her children in Italy. The court found that the display of crucifixes in Italian schools breached the rights of non-Catholic families.

Dr Gonzi said Malta has already made it clear that it disagreed with this decision.

“On a point of principle, we insist that a country which has upheld particular values and traditions for centuries should not be obliged to change them just because an individual objects to them. Indeed, the social and cultural characteristics of society should be respected for as long as the people of such a society so decide. A court which decides otherwise will not be showing sensitivity to such aspects and will be taking a wrong path,” Dr Gonzi said.

Malta was not ashamed of its identity and felt that a society which lost the values on which it was built, lost itself.

He was certain, Dr Gonzi said, that the people of Malta in its absolute majority did not want crucifixes to be removed from classrooms and other public areas.

Therefore, now that the appeal filed by Italy was being heard, the government felt it should ask the court to intervene in order to lend its support and also present legal arguments in order to help overturn the decision of the first court.

Opposition leader Joseph Muscat said the Opposition shared the government’s views.

Do you go to church ?

A friend was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside.

The Pastor said to him, " You need to join the Army of the Lord! " My friend replied, " I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor. "

Pastor questioned, " How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter ? " He whispered back, " I'm in the secret service. "

Hide him during a war

It was about a month ago when a man in Amsterdam felt that he needed to confess, so went to his priest :

" Forgive me Father, for I have sinned. During WWII I hid a refugee in my attic. "

" Well, " answered the priest, " that's not a sin. "

" But I made him agree to pay me 20 Gulden for every week he stayed. "

" I admit that wasn't good, but you did it for a good cause. "

" Oh, thank you, Father; that eases my mind. I have one more question... "

" What is that, my son ? "

" Do I have to tell him the war is over ? "

Church for this drunk

A man sobering up from the night before is sitting through the Sunday sermon, finding it long and boring. Still feeling hung over and tired, he finally nods off.

The priest has been watching him all along, noticing his apparent hangover and is disgusted. At the end of the sermon, the preacher decides to make an example of him.

He says to his congregation, " All those wishing to have a place in heaven, please stand. "

The whole room stands up except, of course, the sleeping man. Then the preacher says even more loudly, " And he who would like to find a place in hell please STAND UP! "

The weary man catching only the last part groggily stands up, only to find that he's the only one standing.

Confused and embarrassed he says, " I don't know what we're voting on here, Father, but it sure seems like you and me are the only ones standing for it! "

Where have you been ?

Sometimes women are overly suspicious of their husbands. When Adam stayed out very late for a few nights, Eve became upset. " You're running around with other women, " she charged.

" You're being unreasonable, " Adam responded. " You're the only woman on earth. " The quarrel continued until Adam fell asleep, only to be awakened by someone poking him in the chest..

It was Eve. " What do you think you're doing ? " Adam demanded. " Counting your ribs, " said Eve.

A very faithful woman

An elderly lady was well-known for her faith and for her boldness in talking about it. She would stand on her front porch and shout " PRAISE THE LORD! "

Next door to her lived an atheist who would get so angry at her proclamations he would shout, " There ain't no Lord!! "

Hard times set in on the elderly lady, and she prayed for GOD to send her some assistance. She stood on her porch and shouted " PRAISE THE LORD. GOD I NEED FOOD!! I AM HAVING A HARD TIME. PLEASE LORD, SEND ME SOME GROCERIES!! "

The next morning the lady went out on her porch and noted a large bag of groceries and shouted, " PRAISE THE LORD. "

The neighbor jumped from behind a bush and said, " Aha! I told you there was no Lord. I bought those groceries, God didn't. "

The lady started jumping up and down and clapping her hands and said, " PRAISE THE LORD. He not only sent me groceries, but He made the devil pay for them. Praise the Lord! "

BLESSED GEORGE PRECA

Diocesan Priest, Founder of the Society of Christian Doctrine, M.U.S.E.U.M.
(Valletta, Malta, 12 February 1880 - Sta. Venera, Malta, 26 July 1962)

BLESSED GEORGE PRECA was born in Valletta, Malta on 12 February 1880 of Vincenzo and Natalina Ceravolo. He was baptised in the Parish Church of Our Lady of Porto Salvo, Valletta, on 17 February. In 1888 the Preca family moved to Ħamrun, a fast growing town not far from Valletta. George received his Confirmation and his first Holy Communion in the parish church of St Cajetan. One day when he was 17 years old George was walking along the Maglio Gardens (Il-Mall) in Floriana. He met one of his Lyceum Professors, Fr Ercole Mompalao, who told him: "Preca, when you grow up, people who revere God will befriend you and you them. You will find your good fortune through them and they through you". After his studies at the Lyceum, George entered the Seminary of Malta with the aim of becoming a priest.

His confessor, Fr Aloysius Galea, died on 8 April 1905. Blessed George used to recount how Fr Galea appeared to him a few days later and told him: "God has chosen you to teach his people". George Preca was enthused with this idea. He wrote a rule in Latin which he wanted to send to Pope Pius X for approval. He envisaged groups of seven permanent deacons in every parish who, with the help of lay auxiliaries, would be responsible for the formation of the people of God. It was around this time (1905-1906) that George met a group of young people at Ħamrun and invited them to start attending his spiritual conferences. He set his eye on their leader, Eugenio Borg, and started explaining the Gospel of John to him. (Later on Eugenio Borg became the first Superior General of the Societas Doctrinae Christianae and was renowned for his holiness when he died in 1967).

A few months before his ordination to the priesthood George Preca almost died of a very serious sickness. Through the intercession of St Joseph he survived the ordeal, but as a consequence of the illness his left lung was permanently impaired. He was ordained priest on 22 December 1906 by Bishop Pietro Pace, and he celebrated his first Solemn Mass at the St Cajetan Parish Church in Ħamrun on Christmas Day. For a number of weeks after ordination George would not venture out of home except to say Mass, after which he would retire to a small room on the roof and remain there all day bereft in meditation and contemplation. Towards the end of January 1907 he called the same group of young people and invited them for a spiritual conference on 2 February at the Ta' Nuzzo Church at Ħamrun.

The little group subsequently rented a small place at n. 6, Fra Diegu Street, Ħamrun and met there for the first time on 7 March 1907. These two dates mark the beginning of the Society of Christian Doctrine: a group of lay people leading an exemplary life, well formed in the principles of the Catholic faith and sent to teach the faith to the people. At first, Fr George called his society Societas Papidum et Papidissarum (Society of the Sons and Daughters of the Pope). In the meanwhile, however, the run-down place where the first members met was jokingly referred to as the "museum". The nickname soon became the name of the group itself and it stuck. The founder had no alternative but to devise an acrostic in Latin: M.U.S.E.U.M., Magister Utinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus! which in translation means: "Teacher, O that the whole world would follow the Gospel!" The female branch of the Society was inau-

gured in 1910 with the help of Giannina Cutajar who later became the first Superior General of the same branch.

It was around 1910 that Dun George had a very powerful mystical experience which he always referred to as “the extraordinary vision of the child Jesus”. One morning, he was passing in the vicinity of the Marsa Cross when he suddenly saw a twelve-year old boy pushing a low cart with a bag full of manure. The boy turned to George and ordered him imperiously: “Lend me a hand!” The moment Fr George put his hand on the cart he felt an extraordinary spiritual sweetness and he never could remember where they went or what happened to the young boy. He later understood however that the boy was Jesus and that the Lord was asking him and his followers to help him with nurturing the Lord’s field and vineyard with sound doctrine and formation.

The M.U.S.E.U.M. developed along the years into the society we know today: a group of lay people who dedicate themselves to the apostolate of catechesis, lead a simple evangelical lifestyle, commit themselves to a life of prayer using short prayers or meditations at regular intervals during the day (“The Museum Watch”), teach the young catechesis for an hour everyday, which is then followed by a group meeting for personal permanent formation (“The Assignment”).

The Society had its difficult moments. In 1909 Dun George was ordered to close his Museum centres. Broken-hearted but without hesitation, he started following superior orders until the parish priests themselves protested with the ecclesiastical authorities and the ban was revoked by Vicar General Salvatore Grech. Between 1914-1915 a number of daily newspapers carried articles and letters denigrating the new So-

ciety. Dun George ordered his members to take a vow or promise of meekness, gladly forgiving anybody who poked fun at them and taught them “to love the contempt” they suffered and not to let it trouble them unduly. In 1916 Bishop Mauro Caruana ordered an enquiry concerning the Society. After many humiliations for the founder and his close followers, the Curia issued a favourable report. Although some changes were required, the way was open for definitive ecclesiastical approval. Bishop Caruana canonically erected the Society of Christian Doctrine on 12 April 1932.

Dun George Preca strived unceasingly to spread the values and teaching of the Gospel in the Maltese islands. He wrote a great number of books on dogma, morals and spirituality in Maltese. He also published numerous booklets with prayers for the private use of his members and for popular devotion. He was undoubtedly a great apostle of the Word of God, especially of the Gospel which he used to call “The Voice of the Beloved”. He would encourage his followers and the public in general to memorize sentences and phrases from the Gospel and his charismatic preaching constantly referred to parables and stories from Scripture and the life of the saints. He zealously defended the honour due only to God and persuasively illustrated how ugly sin was. He never shied away from openly preaching about death, judgement, hell and heaven. Utterly convinced of God’s justice, he nevertheless movingly proclaimed the Lord’s infinite mercy. People flocked to him for advice or a word of encouragement. They trusted in his intercession and many still recount stories of healings wrought by God through Fr George’s prayers. He was endowed with many supernatural gifts, among which were the knowledge of hearts and of the future. He was nonetheless a priest of great humility, goodness,

meekness and generosity. He was truly a holy pastor of the people of God.

Dun Ġorġ, as the Maltese know him, is well known for his constant efforts to promote devotion to the mystery of the Incarnation. From 1917 he propagated devotion for the text from the Gospel of John: “Verbum Dei caro factum est!” (Jn 1, 14). He wanted the SDC members to wear a badge with these words. On Christmas Eve 1921 the Society organized the first “Demonstration in honour of the Baby Jesus” in the towns and villages of Malta and Gozo and this event has since become a typical aspect of Christmas celebrations on the islands. Fr George wanted every child who attended catechism classes to take a small crib or statue of the baby Jesus home for Christmas.

The holy priest learnt to trust in the maternal protection of Our Lady, especially during the difficult moments of the Society. He was enrolled as a Carmelite tertiary on 21 July 1918 and at his profession in September 1919 he chose the name of Fr Franco. Children attending the Society’s centres are still enrolled in Our Lady’s scapular. Dun Ġorġ also nurtured a filial devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel; he promoted use of the Miraculous Medal and in fact wanted the Church of the Society’s Motherhouse to be dedicated to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. In 1957 he suggested the use of five “Mysteries of Light” for the private recitation of the Rosary.

On 19 May 1951 he blessed the foundation stone of the St Michael School at Santa Venera, and in 1952 he sent the first members to start the Society in Australia. The SDC is today also found in England, Albania, the Sudan, Kenya and Peru.

On 2 October 1952 Pope Pius XII nominated Dun Ġorġ as Privy Chamberlain with the

title of Monsignor. Dun George was mortified. He kept the title for six years until Pope Pacelli passed away in 1958.

In 1955 Dun George blessed the foundation stone of the Sacred Family Institute at Żabbar which later housed SDC members living in common who had been staying at Żebbuġ ever since their establishment in 1918.

After a long and very active life in the service of the Gospel and of the Christian formation of the people of God, Dun Ġorġ Preca died on Thursday evening 26 July 1962 at his house: “San Cajetan”, Parish Street, Santa Venera, Malta. He was deeply missed by all the Maltese population. He had wished for a very simple funeral but thousands, including the highest civil and ecclesiastical authorities, turned up to pay him homage. He was buried in the crypt of the Church of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal at Blata l-Bajda which soon became a venue for constant pilgrimages.

Fr George Preca was beatified by Pope John Paul II in Malta on 9 May 2001. His liturgical feast is celebrated on 9 May.

GRAND KIDS

1. She was in the bathroom, putting on her makeup, under the watchful eyes of her young granddaughter, as she'd done many times before. After she applied her lipstick and started to leave, the little one said, "But Gramma, you forgot to kiss the toilet paper good-bye!" I will probably never put lipstick on again without thinking about kissing the toilet paper good-bye.

2. My young grandson called the other day to wish me Happy Birthday. He asked me how old I was, and I told him, 62. My grandson was quiet for a moment, and then he asked, "Did you start at 1?"

3. After putting her grandchildren to bed, a grandmother changed into old slacks and a droopy blouse and proceeded to wash her hair.. As she heard the children getting more and more rambunctious, her patience grew thin. Finally, she threw a towel around her head and stormed into their room, putting them back to bed with stern warnings. As she left the room, she heard the three-year-old say with a trembling voice, "Who was THAT?"

4. A grandmother was telling her little granddaughter what her own childhood was like: "We used to skate outside on a pond. I had a swing made from a tire, it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods." The little girl was wide-eyed, taking this all in. At last she said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner!"

5. My grandson was visiting one day when he asked, "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?" I mentally polished my halo and I said, "No, how are we alike?"..... "You're both old," he replied.

6. A little girl was diligently pounding away on her grandfather's word processor. She told him she was writing a story. "What's it about?" he asked. "I don't know," she replied. "I can't read."

7. I didn't know if my granddaughter had learned her colours yet, so I decided to test her. I would point out something and ask what colour it was. She would tell me and was always correct. It was fun for me, so I continued. At last, she headed for the door, saying, "Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of these, yourself!"

8. When my grandson Billy and I entered our vacation cabin, we kept the lights off until we were inside to keep from attracting pesky insects. Still, a few fireflies followed us in. Noticing them before I did, Billy whispered, "It's no use Grandpa. Now the mosquitoes are coming after us with flashlights."

9. When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure..." "Look in your underwear, Grandpa," he advised, "mine says I'm 4 to 6."

10. A second grader came home from school and said to her grandmother, "Grandma, guess what? We learned how to make babies today." The grandmother, more than a little surprised, tried to keep her cool.. "That's interesting," she said, "how do you make babies?" "It's simple," replied the girl. "You just change 'y' to 'i' and add 'es'."

11. Children's Logic: "Give me a sentence about a public servant," said a teacher. The small boy wrote: "The fireman came down the ladder pregnant." The teacher took the lad aside to correct him. "Don't you know what pregnant means?" she asked.

"Sure," said the young boy confidently. "It means carrying a child."

12. A grandfather was delivering his grandchildren to their home one day when a fire truck zoomed past. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties.

"They use him to keep crowds back," said one child. "No," said another. "He's just for good luck."

A third child brought the argument to a close."They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrants."

13. A 6-year-old was asked where his grandma lived.

"Oh," he said, "she lives at the airport, and when we want her, we just go get her. Then, when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."

14. Grandpa is the smartest man on earth! He teaches me good good things, but I don't get to see him enough to get as smart as him!

15. My Grandparents are funny, when they bend over you hear gas leaks, and they blame their dog.

Għonnella

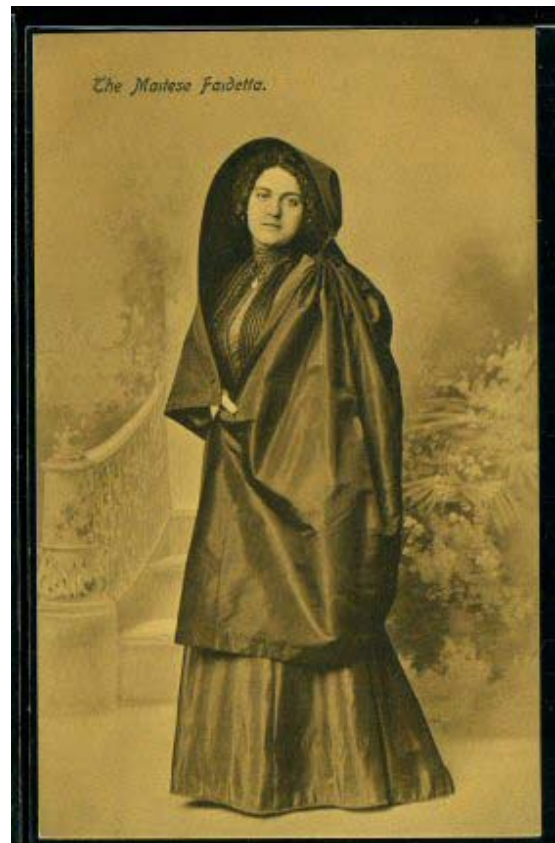
The għonnella, pronounced “awe-nel-la” (pl. għonnielen, pronounced “awe-nee-lan”), sometimes referred to as a Faldetta, was a form of women’s head dress and shawl, or hooded cloak, unique to the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Gozo. It was generally made of cotton or silk, and usually black or some other dark colour, although from the sixteenth century onwards, noble women and women from wealthier households frequently wore white or brightly coloured għonnielen. The għonnella covered the head, and framed but did not cover the face. The upper part of the għonnella was starched quite stiffly, and given a broad, rounded frame, formed by means of a board, cane, or whalebone. This gave the għonnella a mysterious but alluring, sail-like appearance. From a practical perspective, this broad bonnet captured much needed cooling breezes during the hot Maltese summer. On cooler days, the wearer could wrap the għonnella around her face more tightly, by making a slight adjustment. The lower part of the għonnella could be worn loosely draped around the wearer’s bodice and hips, or more tightly wrapped in the case of inclement weather. It would typically fall to mid-calf length. While walking, the wearer would hold one or both sides of the għonnella clasped in her right hand.

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Origins

The origins of the għonnella are unknown. It has been described as a “western garment, worn in an eastern fashion.”[1] Maltese historians Ciantar and Abela were of the view that the



għonnella had evolved from traditional Sicilian dress:

“One cannot deny that the frequent interchange made between the Maltese and Sicilians did not influence local customs. Sicilian influence may be discovered both in the eating habits of the Maltese as well as in the costumes worn in Malta. The garb worn by the Maltese women is a case in point. The women of Malta wear a long black mantel that flows down from the head to the heels. Unlike in Sicily, the net (strascino) is not worn. Our women of the lower classes wear a mantel made of black wool. Noble women, the wives of the Professors of Law and Medicine and rich citizens wear mantels made of silk...”[2]

According to local legend, the għonnella was first introduced to Malta in 1224 C.E. as a sign of mourning by the women of Celano in the Abruzzi region of Italy,[3] who were said to have been expelled - first to Sicily, and then to Malta - by Enrico de Morra, acting on the orders of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, following the massacre of their husbands. There is some historical evidence of this event

recorded in the chronicles of Riccardo di San Germano:

“Henricus de Morra iussu imperiali Celanens-es reuocat ubique dispersos, ut ad propria redeant, et redeuntes capit et in Siciliam mittit, quos apud Maltam dirigit Imperator.”[4]

An alternate legend, which plays on the similarity between the Faldetta and a traditional nun’s habit, suggests that the women of Malta adopted this costume in 1798, to ward off the unwanted advances of Napoleon Bonaparte’s troops. However, this theory was dismissed as a fairy tale in a National Geographic essay about Malta (1935).[5]

According to yet another legend, the għonnella developed due to the strict Canonical requirement (pre-Vatican Council II) that women veil their head before entering a Catholic church. It is said that poorer country girls, who could not afford a cloak or shawl, met the veiling requirement by placing a spare skirt over their head, which gradually evolved into the għonnella. Others speculate that it is a vernacular modification of the eastern veil; it could also be a local variation of the Spanish mantilla.[6]

Historical References

There are references to the għonnella in the early records of the Knights of St. John (Order of Malta), and in eighteenth century travel books. Louis De Boiesglin, historian of the Knights of Malta wrote as follows:

“The Maltese women are little, and have beautiful hands and feet. They have fine black eyes, though they sometimes appear to squint, owing to their always looking out of the same eye; half of the face being covered with a sort of veil made of silk called Faldetta, which they twist about very gracefully, and arrange with much elegance. The women even of the highest rank, unlike their husbands, constantly preserve their costume; and any

one who should adopt the French fashion would make herself very ridiculous. They are extremely fond of gold and silver ornaments, and it is not uncommon to see even the peasants loaded with trinkets of those metals.”[7] Victorian illustrator and traveller, William Henry Bartlett, was clearly intrigued by the Faldetta, describing it as follows in 1851:

“Next, tripping lightly down the steps behind, is a Maltese lady, enveloped in her elegant black silk mantilla, a costume of which it may be said that it renders even the ugly attractive, while the pretty become positively irresistible: so grave, and yet so piquante, so nun-like, and yet so coquettish, are its rustling folds, tastefully drawn round the head, so as to throw additional expression into a deep dark eye, and to relieve a white-gloved hand, and taper Andalusian foot.”[8]

Disappearance of the Għonnella

For centuries, the għonnella was ubiquitous throughout Malta, worn by virtually all adult Maltese women. It was so popular that there were many seamstresses whose sole job was to design, cut and sew għonnielen. However, it rapidly fell into disuse in the 1940s and 1950s, following World War II. By the 1970s, it was rarely seen at all, except among the older members of the Maltese lay missionary movement, the Societas Doctrinæ Christianæ (M.U.S.E.U.M.). By the end of the 20th century, it had disappeared altogether.

Giardiniera

Giardiniera, or mixed pickled vegetables, is what most Italians think of when they hear the words Sotto Aceti, a collection of mixed pickled vegetables. The standard Italian antipasto misto wouldn't be quite right without these, and they also work very well with boiled meats in the winter months. This recipe will make about 2 1/2 pounds, and though you might be tempted to put it all into one big jar, you'll be better off using several smaller jars because the contents of an open jar lose their freshness.

You'll need:

Ingredients:

- 10 ounces (250 g) button onions, peeled and soaked in cold water for an hour
- 10 ounces (250 g) baby carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
- 10 ounces (250 g) white celery, stalks only, stripped of filaments and cut into short lengths
- A medium-sized cauliflower
- 1 quart (1 liter) white wine vinegar (have more handy)
- Olive oil
- A couple of bay leaves
- 2-3 cloves
- 1 teaspoon peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon salt

Preparation:

The vegetables listed are the standard ones one finds in almost every recipe, but you can add other things to suit your taste, for example baby mushrooms, green beans, zucchini, baby cucumbers, or artichoke hearts -- feel free to experiment.

Set the vinegar to boil with the herbs, spices and salt. While it's heating separate the cauliflower florets. When the vinegar comes to a boil, add the vegetables and cook them for about 15 minutes. Remove them to the jars with a slotted spoon and pour the boiling hot vinegar over them; have more boiling vinegar handy should that in which you cooked the vegetables not be sufficient. Sprinkle a tablespoon of olive oil over the top of each jar, cover them tightly, and let them cool. Store them in a cool dark place for a couple of weeks, and they're ready for use. Expect them to keep for a year.

Yield: several jars of giardiniera, Italian pickled vegetables.

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