

THE MALTESE PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA



E-NEWSLETTER

Issue 11

FEBRUARY 2020



FIRST MEETING IN 2020 OF THE ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH MISSION GROUP

Dr. Raymond Xerri

(see page 13)

EDITORIAL COMMENT



Dan Brock

It's interesting how one piece of information can lead to another, and another. Two recent examples are the posting on the Facebook page of the Malta United Society of Windsor, Ontario of Jenise Spiteri's appearance on *Let's Make a Deal* and Rena Xuereb's informing me of the death of Larry J. Zahra, Honorary Consul of Malta in Detroit.

What Jenise Spiteri had to say about her goal of representing Malta as a snowboarder in the 2022 Winter Olympics led me to do some research on her and resulted in the article on page 7. As I worked on this article, I became interested in the intermarriage of her family with persons with the Spiteri surname and with how the Spiteris ended up in California. Both are interesting topics which I hope to present in the March issue.

On learning of the death of Larry Zahra last December, I had asked Rena if she would write a tribute to Larry. This appeared in the January issue of this newsletter.

My subsequent reading of Larry Zahra's "Present Situation in the United States of America," a paper he read at the Convention of Leaders of Associations of Maltese Abroad and of Maltese Origin in 2000, led to my research on Eugene Mizzi, one of Detroit's, and also Schenectady, New York's, early Maltese settlers. My article on him also appeared in January's issue.

Research on Eugene Mizzi, in turn, has led me to Achille Sapienza (aka

Cony Sapienza) who is possibly the first person of Maltese birth to have settled in both Schenectady and Detroit.

I had planned to include an article on Sapienza in this issue but, as incoming submissions pushed this issue to 16 then to 20 pages, the article got crowded out and will hopefully appear in the March issue.

In turn, the research on both Mizzi and Sapienza has led me to the study of the first Maltese to arrive in Schenectady, and there were several of them. Curiously, they are a group of which not even the late Fr. Lawrence E. Attard seemed to be aware.

For this reason, I believe their story needs to be told. If all goes as planned, I hope to have an introductory article on these first Maltese to arrive in Schenectady for the April issue.

There has been a change in the location of the past issues of *The Maltese Presence in North America* and the current "Table of Contents" on the web page of the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco. Go to <http://maltese-americanscsf.org/maltese-journal.aspx>.

As with past issues, a debt of gratitude is owed to Mona Vella-Nicholas of the Bay Area for applying her proofreading skills to this issue.

I wish to thank the editors of the *Catholic Vancouver*, *The Malta Independent* and *The Times of Malta* for allowing me to reprint an article which appeared in each. In the case of the two articles from the *Catholic Vancouver*, the newspaper for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, my thanks also goes to Susan Schembri of Coquitlam, BC, who sent me the articles, arranged for permission to reprint them and supplied updates on events in her area.

My appreciation also is extended to Mark Caruana, Fr. Mario Micallef, Brian Muscat, Evelyn Simmons, Louis J. Vella, Dr. Raymond Xerri and Rena Xuereb for their contributions to this issue.

I would encourage other organizations and associations to likewise keep me abreast of activities, both planned and which have recently taken place. Let this newsletter be another way of getting

your word out.

I thought I would have had more in this issue on the New Year's Eve dinners and dances celebrated by the various organizations. The Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco, however, was the only one to follow up on this as seen on pages 11 and 20.

A few subscribers are in the process of preparing articles for upcoming issues. I would encourage others to think about doing likewise.

For those wishing to contact me, I can be reached at dbrock40@worldline.ca and, if needed, I can provide you with my mailing address and telephone number.

Interest has been expressed in advertising in this newsletter. If interested, contact me and I'll provide you with the schedule of rates, both in Canadian and American currency.

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GLEANINGS FROM THE SUNDAY BULLETIN

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS...



Fr. Mario Micallef, M SSP, is pastor of St. Paul the Apostle, Toronto, the only Maltese national parish in North America. These "Pastor's thoughts..." are extracts from his commentaries on the Sunday readings which are published in the Parish's Sunday Bulletin.

Putting God in Our Families

...in spite of the fact that the Holy Family was not your normal family, yet they went through exactly the same experiences that our own families go through. By putting God first, they kept going, and helped the child grow to become what God intended him to become, which is, after all, the vocation of every parent.

By their actions Joseph and Mary give us a great message for our lives....St. Paul gives us more down-to-earth advice about family life. Paul knows quite well that there is no "perfect family." Even the best of families has its moments of trouble, disagreements, and crises. In his recipe Paul put in ingredients such as compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. How difficult it is to stay humble when an argument arises. We all want to be proved right! And what about compassion: trying to see things through the eyes of the other person, before we start judging and complaining? And then, as the icing on the cake, Paul throws in forgiveness and love. Notice that Paul does not tell us not to have arguments, not to hurt each other. He knows quite well that, in a human world, this would be impossible. But he does tell us to forgive, not to hold grudges....Paul knows that if any relationship is to survive and grow, forgiveness has to be an essential part of its life. A marriage-relationship is no exception. And the, above all, Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with love....We know what Paul understands by love....It is a love that expects nothing in return, that seeks the good of the other rather than one's own.

Let us make sure to put God in our families, like St. Joseph did, and let us ask God to help us to put love as He understands it as the basis of all our relationships.

What Do I Seek?

God often gives us joy or happiness in unexpected ways....

Perhaps a question I can ask myself today is what am I looking for in life? Where do I seek to attain happiness? And what do I use to guide me to get there?

You Are My son, My Daughter, the Beloved with Whom I Am Well Pleased!

....At the baptism of Jesus God Speaks, the heavens are opened. There are no more barriers between God and man. Distance between heaven and earth disappears. The God who spoke to Adam in the beginning as a friend, speaks again, with love. Reconciliation is indeed happening. God's Spirit descends like a dove – silently, gently, as a sign of peace.

It is this same dynamics that one lives in one's own baptism. It is in the God who is present in the Jordan – Father, Son and Spirit – that we are all baptized. The one-ness which had been destroyed by sin is now made whole again. As St. Athanasius would bravely put it, "the Son of god became man so that we might become God". And together with Jesus, we too hear that wonderful voice. You are my son, my daughter, the beloved with whom I am well pleased. If this is not enough reason for rejoicing, I don't know what is!

Jesus Meets Us in the Ordinariness of Our Lives

....As we journey through this coming year, we shall constantly be seeing Jesus approaching other people, usually people who have gone wrong. He is never the one to sit there waiting for them to repent and come to him asking for forgiveness. He walks toward them; he reaches out to them; he always offers them a new possibility. Moreover, their sins need not be a burden for them anymore because like the lamb let loose into the wilderness to be devoured by the wild beasts, Jesus has taken upon his shoulders the people's sins and will eventually give his life for them.

....Our lives are made up of ordinary things and events. The extraordinary is often only the exception. And it is in the ordinariness of our everyday life that Jesus comes to meet us: as we go around doing our daily chores, as we do our best to live our vocations, as we struggle through our weaknesses.

In the ordinariness of our lives we are called to live out our vocation...We are prone to make mistakes as we go along. What is important is that, once we realize what we have done, we do not stay there. All we have to do is get up, learn something from it, and move on. On my own I would not have been able to do this. I would probably stay focused on my misery, my weakness, my nothingness. But...even in those moments, Jesus is reaching out to me. He is giving me a hand to help me get up, dust myself, and move on.

Newly-Formed Group

St. Paul the Apostle Parish Mission Group (Est. 2020)
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giovanvel@sympatico.ca

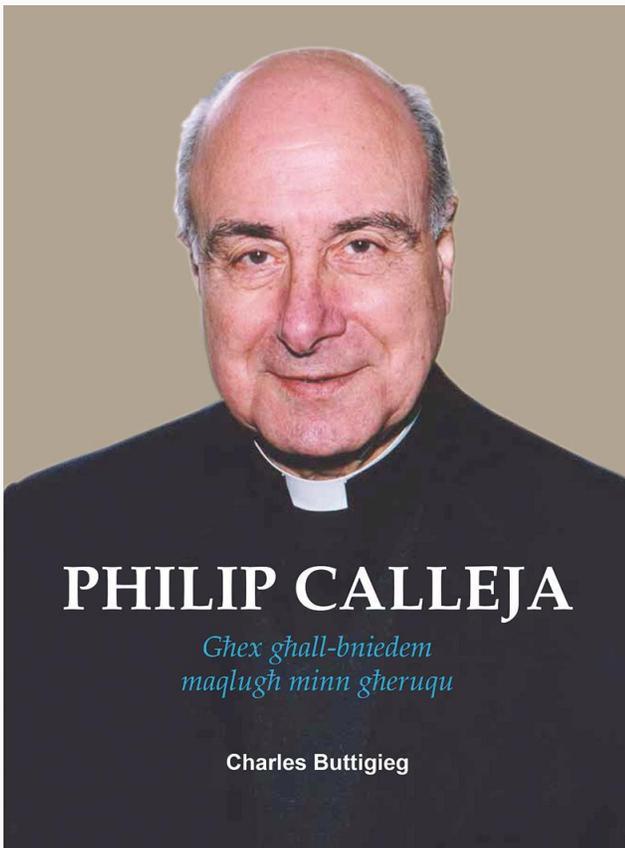
www.facebook.com/john.vella.1044186

EMIGRANTS' PRIEST AND REFUGEES' SAMARITAN

Editor's Note: Mons. Philip Calleja is probably familiar to anyone who has emigrated from Malta since the Second World War. Charles Buttigieg, Mons. Calleja's biographer, is the author of "Malta Migration Museum," which appeared on pages 5-6 of the September 2019 issue of this newsletter.

Mgr Philip Calleja – A life dedicated to uprooted people (Mons Philip Calleja – Għex għall-bniedem maqluġh minn għeruqu) is the title of a 500-page biography which was launched on December 4 by the Emigrants' Commission and Midsea Books, focusing on Mgr Calleja's 70 years of committed service to Maltese emigrants, asylum seekers in Malta and the Church.

The biography was written by Charles Buttigieg, a close collaborator of Mgr Calleja for several years, who is also the author of two books about the Archbishop Mgr Joseph Mercieca and another about Archbishop Mgr Michael Gonzi, all published by Midsea Books. The author looks at Mgr Calleja as the priest for Maltese emigrants and a Samaritan for refugees in Malta.



The book in itself also offers the story of the Emigrants' Commission, born on March 1, 1950, through the initiative of the Catholic Action Movement. It further recounts how Dar I-Emigrant, in Valletta, came into being through the initiative of Mgr Calleja.

Speaking on the occasion of the laying of the Foundation Stone of Dar I-Emigrant, on February 10, 1971, Mgr Calleja saw the building as a permanent monument in honour of the Maltese migrant. Then, when the Emigrants' Commission became Malta's pioneer in the international protection and humanitarian support of asylum seekers in Malta, Mgr Calleja ensured that Dar I-Emigrant also serves as a beehive of activity for refugees.

"As we can see from this book about his life, Mgr Philip believed fully in what he did and continues to do so and strive to see that the organisation he developed and sustained for so many years continues to move ahead. At the age of 91, he is still giving his contribution with full commitment and zeal," says Mgr Alfred Vella, his successor as director of the Emigrants' Commission, in the preface of the biography. Mgr Vella adds that Mgr Calleja always had and still has a deep desire to make himself available for those who have to leave their home in search of a new future elsewhere.

The book includes five sections dedicated to the childhood and up-bringing of Mgr Calleja in Valletta; his enormous love and dedication to the Maltese emigrant and his family; his life in the Church; his big Samaritan heart for the refugee; and what Mgr Calleja says about a number of particular persons he worked with throughout his life.

The basic information sources of the biography are Mgr Calleja himself, the Archives of the Emigrants' Commission and of the Migration Museum housed at Dar I-Emigrant, and the direct personal experiences the author has had over the years in working closely with Mgr Calleja.

Mgr Calleja enjoys international and local recognition for his lifelong dedicated work for Maltese migrants and asylum seekers in Malta.

On March 16, 2010, Stephen Gatt, president of the Federation of Maltese Abroad, presented to Mgr Calleja a plaque which states as follows: "In recognition of a lifetime of service, labour and travail well in excess of the call of duty in the interests of Maltese Migrants across the diaspora."

Mgr Calleja was also granted a certification by UNHCR "in appreciation for years of dedicated service and close collaboration". The Emigrants' Commission was UNHCR's operational partner in Malta from 1987 to 2004, when UNHCR's role in the island had taken a new form in the light of Malta's Refugees Act.

**This article appeared in The Times of Malta, December 22, 2019. See [timesofmalta.com/articles/view/emigrants-priest-and-refugees-samaritan.758911](https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/emigrants-priest-and-refugees-samaritan.758911). Printed with permission of The Times of Malta.*

EJJEW F'GHAQDA SHIHA NFASLU KALENDARJU WIEHED GHALL-MALTIN-KANADIŽI KOLLHA

**Dr. Raymond Xerri,
Il-Konslu Ġenerali /
Consul General**



LET US TOGETHER IN UNITY DEVISE A MALTESE-CANADIAN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February – the month of St Paul and Carnival

For Maltese everywhere, February is the month we remember St Paul The Apostle's shipwreck on the Maltese Islands, a story enshrined in golden letters on the pages of the world's most popular and most read book—the *Holy Bible*. 'We learned that the island was called Malta...and its people welcomed us with great kindness.' Such words thrust our mother country, Malta, into the centre of human history. Saint Paul was the person who brought the Christian faith to the Maltese and Gozitans, and, to this day, the Maltese Islands are still predominately Christian and Christianity is still enshrined in Article 2 of our Constitution as the official religion of the Maltese Islands.

Maltese-Canadians are blessed that the Maltese-Canadian Church in the heart of 'Malta Village' in Toronto is dedicated to St Paul The Apostle.

Frar ix-xahar ta' San Pawl u l-Karnival

Frar huwa sinonimu mall-miġja ta' l-Apostlu Missierna San Pawl, storja li hi mnaqxa b'ittri tad-deheb fl-aktar ktieb popolari u moqri fid-dinja – il-Bibja Mqaddsa. '...u l-gżira kien jismha Malta .. nies laqawna b'hlewwa liema bhala,' kliek li poġġa lill-pajjiżna fiċ-centru tal-istorja tal-bniedem. San Pawl huwa dak il-bniedem li ġab il-fidi Nisranija lill-poplu Malti u Għawdxin u li sal-lum għadha r-religjon ta' Malta fil-skont Artiklu 2 tal-Kostituzzjoni.

Bhala Maltin-Kanadiżi, ixxortjati li l-Knisja tagħna l-Maltin u l-Għawdxin fil-Kanada li tinsab f'Malta Village hi propju ddedikata lill-Apostlu San Pawl.

F'Malta apparti li hi festa nazzjonali tiġi ċelebrata f'kull belt u raħal, il-Belt Valletta, f'Malta u l-Munxar f'Għawdex għandhom parroċċi ddedikati li dan il-qaddis b'festi kbar organizzati f'Frar fil-Belt Valletta u f'Mejju fil-Munxar.

Festa oħra popolari, din id-darba ta' kuluri jssir fil-Karnival tal-Gzejjer Malta. Diversi bliet u rħula Maltin u Għawdxin jorganizzaw il-Karnival minn b'laqta' lokali, minn reġjonali u l-Karnival nazzjonali li jsir fil-Belt Valletta. Il-Karnival tan-Nadur, Għawdex huwa mhux biex partikolari, iżda' wkoll għamel hooss sew fl-isfera internazzjonali fejn hafna turisti jiġu apposta għal dan il-Karnival msejjaħ 'spontanju.'



**One of the Many Colourful and Creative Floats
Seen in Malta during Carnival**



**Statue of St. Paul the Apostle,
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Toronto**

In Malta the 10th of February is not only a national holiday, but feasts are celebrated in all parishes, particularly in the national capital Valletta and in the village of Munxar in Gozo. The latter organises the feast in May whilst the former celebrates the feast on the 10th February.

Another very popular feast, is the celebration of colour and creativity which is the Carnival of the Maltese Islands. While the national carnival is held in Valletta, many towns and vil-

Il-Kalendarju Malti-Kanadiz

Sa mill-bidu tal-mandat tiegħi bħala l-Konslu Ġenerali tagħkom, wiegħed li mhux biss naħdem għall-għaqda fost il-Maltin-Kanadiżi, pero' li flimkien ma kull minn hu kkonċernat, infasslu għall-ewwel darba Kalendarju komprensiv wiegħed, tal-attivitajiet kollha li jsiru ġurnata b'ġurnata, fil-klabbs u l-assoċazzjonijiet kollha u fil-provincji kollha Kanadiżi, kif wkoll l-attivitajiet li jsiru fil-Gżejjer Maltin relatati ma' Malta u l-Kanada u l-Maltin-Kanadiżi. Dan huwa proġett ambizzju pero' nemmen li nistgħu naslu.

Għaliex huwa mportanti li l-Komunita' Maltija-Kanadiża jkollha Kalendarju wiegħed għal kulhadd? L-ewwelnett, b'Kalendarju wiegħed jasal il-messaġġ tal-għaqda, organizzazzjoni u eżempju lil ħaddieħor. It-tieni, b'Kalendarju wiegħed kulhadd ikun informat b'dak kollu li jiġi organizzata fejn qabel l-informazzjoni kienet tasal f'biċċijiet u ħafna drabi wara li jssir t-talli attivita'. B'faċilita' ta' Kalendarju, wiegħed jista' jippjana aħjar liema attivitajiet jixtieq jattendi, jinforma lil familta u sħabu tax-xogħol jew l-iskola, kif ser jattendu u f'gruppi aħbar. Dan il-Kalendarju għandu jinfirx u jilħaq lil kemm jista' jkun nies.

Diga' bdejna, f'din l-edizzjoni tal-revista, 'The Maltese Presence in North America,' għandkom issib l-attivitajiet kollha li nafu bihom fix-xahar ta' Frar madwar il-Kanada kollha u f'Malta. Jekk Alla jrid, fl-edizzjoni ta' Marzu jkollkom lista tal-attivitajiet ta' Marzu u l-istess fix-xhur li ġejjin. Bħala Konslu Ġenerali tagħkom nappella għall-kooperazzjoni sħiħa mhux biex mall-uffiċċju iżda' bejnitkom l-għaqdiet u l-klabbs Maltin-Kanadiżi. Ejjew inkun eżempju għall-komunitajiet Maltin oħra madwar id-dinja. Il-Malti jgħid, 'Fejn hemm l-għaqda hemm is-saħħa'.

O Mulej, bierek dejjem lil Malta u lill-Kanada.

lages around the Maltese Islands celebrate Carnival. In Gozo the village of Nadur has a particularly unique spontaneous carnival which has increasingly attracted thousands of Maltese and tourists from all over the world to Gozo.

Let us take the step of publishing the Maltese-Canadian Calendar

From the beginning of my posting as your Consul General of Malta, I promised to work tirelessly for unity amongst the Maltese-Canadians and to work with all to achieve a list of events, day by day, of all associations and clubs in all the Canadian provinces, along with Canadian-Maltese events in Malta.

Why is it so important that the Maltese-Canadian Community have one calendar of events for all? Firstly, one calendar expresses unity, organisation and a clear and good example to others. Secondly, by such a calendar, the maximum amount of people can be informed of all that is organised in the community, so that you can inform your family and friends at your work place and in your schools, thereby positively affecting the attendance at such events.

We have started, in this edition of the newsletter 'The Maltese Presence in North America,' a list of events throughout Canada for this month. We intend to do the same in the March edition and so on. My appeal as your Consul General is for individuals and all Maltese-Canadian associations and clubs to cooperate fully with each other and with my office. Let us make history and be an example to other Maltese communities around the world. 'Where there is unity there is strength,' is a Maltese saying from the wisdom of our forefathers.

May God bless Malta and Canada.

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CORRECTIONS TO JANUARY ISSUE

Dan Brock

On page 15, column 2, it should read "by Fr. Linus Kinyua of St. Alphonsus Church, Dearborn" not "by Fr. Linous Kinyua of St. Alphonus Church, Dearborn."

Page 14, col. 2 and page 26, col. 2 should read Larry J. Zahra died on "Monday, December 16th" not "Thursday, December 19th."

Page 22, col. 1 should read "Matul din is-sena ser tiffakkar il-110-il sena" not "Matul din is-sena ser tiffakkar il-115-il sena"

Page 25, col. 1 should read "Rachael (Cini) Darin assists with the Club's online newsletter" as opposed to being its editor.

Page 27, col. 2 should read Carrie Grech died at the age of "105" not "104."

My apologies.

SNOWBOARDER JENISE SPITERI HOPES TO REPRESENT MALTA IN THE 2022 WINTER OLYMPICS

Dan Brock

Episode 59, season 11 of the popular American game show *Let's Make a Deal* was aired on New Year's Day and has since gone viral throughout Malta and the Maltese Diaspora.

It all started when the enthusiastic native of Redwood City, California, 27-year-old Jenise Spiteri shared her snow-boarding past with host Wayne Brady.

"I tried to go to the last Olympics but that's when I blew my knee out and missed it by one spot, so 2022."

As Brady cheered her on with "Team USA," Jenise corrected him with "Team Malta."

This was all the comedian and impromptu satirist needed to make good-humoured fun of everything from Malta's international sport accomplishment to its national anthem.

Of course, Jenise fuelled Brady's satire with such comments as "I'm Maltese...Not like the dog...Like the humans."

Then she volunteered some of her family background by saying: "My grandma had the maiden name that she married into and her mother also had the same maiden name that she married but none of them were related. They were all different families with the same last name."

A referral to Dr. Charles J. Vella's "Maltese Immigration to San Francisco Bay Area" database on line shows this Spiteri connection. Jenise's paternal grandmother's maiden name was Carmela Spiteri and she married Joseph Spiteri. Carmela's mother's maiden name was Gajtana Spiteri and she married Gorgio Spiteri.

Brady was trying to be witty when he said: "Hmm, Hmm...Hmm, Hmm...Hmm, Hmm...Family tree with one, big old root...Hmm, Hmm...." Ironically, he is probably correct, and one day this interrelationship of the three Spiteri families may appear on line on Charles Said-Vassallo's *Malta Genealogy* website.

If you would like to see the video in question, go to <https://www.facebook.com/LetsMakeADealCBS/videos/101821093191114381>

Living in Canada, I couldn't get this but it is also on Facebook, The Malta United Society of Windsor. Scroll down to Daryl Muscat, "Jan. 2 By the end of today's show...."

As for Jenise Spiteri, while most future professional

snowboarders start their "training" at the age of seven or younger, she didn't begin her training until the age of 17.

For her, it was a quick learning curve and in just six years she was travelling around the world to Olympic qualifying events with the goal of competing for Malta at the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea as Élise Pellegrin was to do in skiing.

Then, six months before the 2018 Olympics, Jenise completely tore her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and partially her meniscus in a random snowboard accident while training in New Zealand. Undeterred, she pushed through the injury and competed in the next Olympic qualifier only three weeks later.

Doing her best to work with her blown-out knee for the next six months Jenise trained as much as her knee would allow and competed in every event. At her last qualifier event she placed 15th landing a new trick she had not done before in competitions. Thinking she had secured her spot for the Olympics, her trip to South Korea was booked.

Unfortunately, only 24 women get to compete in the Olympic Half Pipe event and Jenise was number 25. Her chance to be Malta's first snowboarder in the Olympics crushed, she returned home, with a heavy heart "to finally get knee surgery and begin her recovery."



Jenise is now focused on earning a spot in the 2022 Winter Olympics. Unfortunately, the financial support she had for the previous Olympics "seems to have vanished." Like Élise Pellegrin, as noted in the January issue, page 26, Jenise is in need of private funding. For further details go to twitter.com/jenisespiteri?long=en. You can also follow Jenise on YouTube and Facebook.

MALTA'S CHRISTIANS SET TONE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY IN 2020

Michael Swan*

An island nation that is more than 90 per cent Catholic is using the story of a shipwreck to remind Christians what ecumenism is really about — kindness, welcome and the bonds of our common humanity.

This theme and prayers for the 2020 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25) were chosen by Christians in Malta. Materials can be downloaded for free from the Canadian Council of Churches.

The Maltese have picked their favourite Bible passage to key the prayers, Bible study and liturgies for the week — the story of how St. Paul was shipwrecked on the shores of Malta (Acts 27:18 to 28:10) in about the year 60. From the fairly long passage, they have chosen “They showed us unusual kindness” as the motto or theme for this year’s events.

The annual week of liturgies and other events promoting Christian unity is co-sponsored by the Vatican and the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. Started in 1908 by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement as the Octave of Christian Unity, the week is observed by Christians in virtually every country in the world.

In the Archdiocese of Vancouver, services will be held in Abbotsford and Vancouver. For a list of churches and dates visit rcav.org/christian-unity.

The week and the ecumenical movement it represents continue to struggle to find resonance with ordinary church-goers, said Canadian Council of Churches general secretary Peter Noteboom.

“We do need to re-think, re-strategize, reconsider,” he said.



Orthodox Metropolitan Gennadios of Italy and Malta, Pope Francis, and Rev. Tim Macquiban, minister of Rome's Ponte Sant'Angelo Methodist Church, leave an ecumenical prayer service marking the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2019. This year's week of prayer starts Jan. 18. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Noteboom wishes the liturgy featuring bishops and other Church leaders would filter down to more parishes and congregations across Canada.

“We need to think a little more carefully about how we turn that (Jan. 26 liturgy) into action, how we connect that with our communities, how we make that part of what people see as their own commitment to their Christian friends in other Christian denominations,” he said.

The Canadian Council of Churches is the primary organizer of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Canada. The churches under the CCC umbrella represent about 85 per cent of Canada’s Christians, including Catholics.

For the Maltese in Canada, this year’s week-long celebration of Christian unity will seem very natural, said Fr. Mario Micallef, pastor of Toronto’s Maltese parish of St. Paul the Apostle. A week centred on the shipwreck story in Acts will be a kind of rehearsal for the annual Feb. 10 Feast of St. Paul’s Shipwreck, a highlight of the liturgical year for Maltese Catholics. The emphasis on kindness and welcome as the basis for Christian unity will resonate with all Maltese, Micallef said.

“It’s part of our DNA,” he said.



A statue of St. Paul in the grotto dedicated to him in Malta. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

In the midst of a migration crisis on the Mediterranean Sea, Malta’s foreign-born population has increased from three per cent in 2005 to 21 per cent in 2019. Welcoming strangers was central to how Malta became Christian and is still part of how the Maltese see themselves, Micallef said.

“The people of the island welcomed them (St. Paul along with the shipwrecked soldiers, sailors and prisoners) despite that they didn’t know who they were. They were strangers, they were foreigners,” said Micallef. “Somehow they were open to the teaching of St. Paul. As an island, as a nation, we believe that’s the baptism of Malta.”

The story of the shipwreck near the end of the Book of Acts is thematically linked to the Pentecost story near the

beginning of the book, said Regis College Scripture scholar Jonathan Bernier.

“The Malta account helps to bring this theme of overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers to something of a conclusion,” Bernier said in an e-mail. “As people on an island far from Jerusalem welcome Paul and his companions with ‘unusual kindness.’”

Bernier also points out how the shipwreck tale in Acts continues themes laid down in the Gospel of St. Luke’s Christmas story.

“The angels heralded the birth of Jesus with glad tidings, wishing peace on Earth and goodwill to all,” he said. “The Malta account, with its reference to unusual kindness, helps to bring this theme of peace and goodwill to a conclusion.”

**Michael Swan is associate editor of The Catholic Register and an award-winning writer and photographer. Printed with permission of editor of Catholic Vancouver. The article appeared on January 8, 2020 and was reprinted from The Catholic Register, with local files.*

MALTA STILL COMMEMORATES ST. PAUL’S SHIPWRECK

J.P. Sonnen – Global Pilgrim*

The island fortress of Malta bears witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history.

During the Second World War, the Axis powers resolved to bomb and starve Malta into submission by attacking its ports, cities, and Allied shipping supply lines.

Tragically, this peaceful island paradise sustained catastrophic damage from 1940 to 1942, the result of constant Italian and German bombings. In fact, Malta is one of the most intensively bombed places in the history of warfare.

As Malta rebuilt in the wake of World War II, many Maltese emigrated to countries such as Canada and Australia in search of work.

The post-war Prime Minister of Malta, Paul Boffa, was in office from 1947 to 1950 and was very fond of Canada and Canadians. He was also a devout man whose nephew, a Dominican priest who lives in Malta today, relates how he stood on the docks greeting and consoling those who were setting sail for a new life.

The Prime Minister used to say that in his long career he had worked with many people from various nations, but he believed the kindest were Canadians.

In those years a number of Maltese immigrants came to British Columbia, a small colony of them settling in Powell River on the Sunshine Coast.

The Maltese who settled there are now in their third generation. In Powell River they felt at home on the ocean where they helped build a thriving new parish, Church of the Assumption.

This led to the arrival from Malta of six courageous nuns, members of the Missionary Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth, who

founded Assumption School in 1961.

These pioneer sisters had great devotion to St. Paul due to the fact the saint spent three months in Malta after he was shipwrecked on the island around 60 A.D. The sisters taught this devotion to their students.



The cave where tradition holds St. Paul was kept during his stay in Malta. (OC-Travel)

In Malta, Paul is traditionally believed to have washed ashore at St. Paul’s Bay, where he met the Maltese people and experienced their hospitality, while suffering a series of misfortunes, including a snake bite on the beach when he first arrived.

Malta, which is visible on a clear day from Sicily, was long believed from pre-historic times to be a sacred place. The inhabitants who welcomed Paul were a religious, albeit pagan, people.

When they saw Paul emerging from the waters and surviving a snake bite on the hand without harm, they concluded he was a god. His fame quickly spread and caught the attention of the governor of the island, a man known as Publius.

Publius received Paul for three days at his home, entertaining him courteously, as related in the Acts of the Apostles.

During this encounter the father of Publius was sick with fever. Paul entered the room, prayed, laid hands on him, and healed him. Suddenly, all the diseased on the island were coming to Paul to be healed.

The result was Christianity’s fame spread and Christ was honoured with praise and thanksgiving.

Paul effectively became the founder of the Maltese church, achieving great fame as he preached, baptized, celebrated the Eucharist, and worked miraculous healings.

A popular site that Maltese families are fond of visiting is the 17th-century Collegiate Church of St. Paul in Rabat. Also known as St. Paul’s Grotto and catacombs, it is built atop where Publius’ home is believed to have stood.



A statue of St. Publius is brought into Valletta, Malta, for a 2009 ceremony marking the anniversary of the arrival of St. Paul in Malta in the year 60 after being shipwrecked on his way to Rome. The Maltese trace their conversion to Christianity to St. Paul's three-month stay on the island.

(CNS photo/Darrin Zammit Lupi, Reuters)

The Roman foundations are still visible today, including the cave where tradition says St. Paul stayed. The cave stands out among a maze of other catacombs, all pointing toward this one. Archeologists believe many families over the centuries buried their dead near where the saint had lived, prayed, and worked his miracles.

The areas, used as air raid shelters during World War II, are open today for tourists and pilgrims to explore.

Inside the cave of St. Paul is a Carrara marble statue of the saint donated in 1748, as well as a silver lamp in the shape of a ship hanging from the ceiling.

The outside facade of the church has a colourful mosaic of Christ from the Vatican Mosaic Studios. Installed in 1951, it depicts Christ extending his arms wide with the caption *Venite Ad Me Omnes* ("Come to Me All").

Various other sites in Malta commemorate the memory of St. Paul, such as the Metropolitan Cathedral of Malta in neighbouring Mdina. Another is the much-visited Collegiate Church of the Shipwreck of St. Paul, founded in 1570 and one of the oldest churches in Valletta.

Finally, one that deserves mention is the charming little St. Paul's Church on Valley Road in Birkirkara, which celebrates the area where according to tradition St. Paul once preached. This forgotten gem has fascinating post-war ceiling paintings by Briffa that are a national treasure, vividly depicting the courageous adventures of St. Paul.

The ceilings were recently restored, revealing the artist's strong and luminous palette and bringing to mind a fitting quote from St. Paul: "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be

courageous, be strong" (1 Cor 16:13).

**John Paul Sonnen is a travel writer, tour operator and history docent with Orbis Catholic Travel LLC. Printed with permission of editor of Catholic Vancouver. The article appeared on January 6, 2020.*

MARK CARUANA TO BE AWARDED THE MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

Dan Brock

Sometime in April or May of this year, Mark Caruana of Marayong, part of Metropolitan Sydney, NSW, Australia will be invited to attend an investiture ceremony and be awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) (General Division) "For service to the Maltese community of New South Wales."

Mark's name appeared among the Australia Day 2020 Honours List published on the Governor-General of Australia's website, www.gg.gov.au, on January 26th.

Mark is no stranger to readers of this newsletter as, since its inception, he has contributed several articles and, from time to time, I have made reference to him.

Nor is he a stranger to the Maltese Diaspora at large.

When Barry York wrote *The Maltese in Australia* (1986), "the first book to outline the story of Maltese immigration – and immigrants – in Australia" one of the individuals whose help he acknowledged was that of Mark Caruana.

In his book *Maltese Achievers in Australia* (2006), Maurice N. Cauchi made several references to Mark and, in the biographies relating to those in the field of "Maltese History and other writers," devotes more than two pages to Mark and his publications.

Michael J. Schiavone, in his two-volume *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies* (2009) has a three-paragraph biography on Mark.

Mark was featured as "Personality of the Month" in the May 29, 2018 issue of the e-newsletter *The Voice of the Maltese*.

As Prof. Maurice Cauchi has noted in his biography of Mark, he is a "Migration Historian." Were it not for the data bases on those of Maltese birth or blood who immigrated to Canada and the United States, which Mark very generously shared with me, and his original encouragement that I broaden my interests in the Maltese beyond the areas of Brantford and London, Ontario, I would probably never have expanded my research on the Maltese further afield.

It goes without saying that, had I not ventured into the study of all the Maltese who came to Canada and, more recently those who immigrated to the United States, I would never have thought, following the dissolution of The Maltese Canadian Club of London, of which I was editor, of establishing an e-newsletter pertaining to the Maltese of all North America.

Congratulations Mark and, while this national recognition is specifically for your service to the Maltese community within the State of New South Wales, many of us applaud your contribution to the Maltese Diaspora globally.

ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE MALTESE COMMUNITIES

Dan Brock

The Bay Area, California

Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco

The Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, December 29th, with 76 members present. The new slate of officers for 2020 is as follows:

President – Joe DeBattista
 Vice-President – Mary Borg-Smith
 Assistant Secretary – Carmen Micallef
 Treasurer – Joseph J. Vella
 Assistant Treasurer – Ninfa Pace
 Parliamentarian – Rose Borg
 Sargeant-At-Arms – George Borg
 Auditors – Louis J. Vella
 Mona Nicholas

A New Year's Eve Dinner and Dance was held at on the club's premises. (See photos below and on page 20.)



One of the Groups at a Table



Ringing in the New Year

Evelyn Simmons

The first membership meeting of the new year was held on Sunday, January 26th. The next is to be held at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, February 23th.

British Columbia

A get together for all the Maltese living in British Columbia is planned for Sunday, February 16th, between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. at:

ABC Restaurant, 100 Schoolhouse Street, Cioquitlan, BC V3K 6V9. Tel. 604-526-2272.

All the fish and chip you can eat for a set price.

Call Susan Schembri at 604-318-3928 to confirm attendance.

Mr. Alvin Scicluna Managing Director of Citadel Video Communications in Gozo will be in Vancouver and other parts of British Columbia, March 23rd-30th. The purpose of his trip is to meet as many Maltese people in British Columbia as possible. We will be organizing interviews with some Maltese living in the Vancouver vicinity and hopefully Vancouver Island and the coast. If anyone wishes to share a special experience of their lives in British Columbia please feel free to contact Susan Schembri at 604-318-3928. More details will be advised and noted on the link for The Malta-British Columbia Connection.

The Consul on the Move Programme: The newly appointed Consul General Dr. Raymond C. Xerri will be visiting British Columbia, June 11th-18th. He will be attending to the needs of the Maltese living in British Columbia, mainly completing and executing dual citizenship documentations and passports. Dates are subject to change. If you know anyone who is interested in obtaining dual citizenship or requires assistance with other documents, please contact the office of the Consulate General of Malta in Toronto ahead of these dates. Telephone: 1-416-207-0922/0989

The Greater Toronto Area, Ontario

A meeting is to be held at the Annette Street Branch, Toronto Public Library, at 2:00 p.m., Friday, February 21st, to discuss issuing a license for Runnymede Healthcare Centre to build a 200-bed, long-term care home next to its existing facility. Twenty beds are specifically intended for Maltese Canadians requiring such care.

Consulate General of the Republic of Malta

Dr. Raymond Xerri will be holding a question and answer session at the Melita Soccer Club, between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m., on Saturday, February 15th. On Sunday, February 16th, starting at 3:00 p.m. he will hold a similar session at the Malta Band Club.

Malta Band Club

The Club held a New Years Eve Dinner and Dance on Tuesday, December 31st.

The Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, January 19th. The Executive Committee for 2020 is as follows:

- President – Anthony Vella
- Vice President – John Borg
- Secretary – Virginia Church
- Treasurer – Cathy Ebejer
- Band Director – Anthony Frendo
- Youth Director – Fred Portelli
- Hall Director – Joe Camilleri
- Directors – Charles Desira
Edgar Gambin
Spiro Tanti

chicken wings, pizza, ribs, French fries, nachos, chips, veggies & dig, fruit, etc. Raffle draws were also held.

Family Day will be celebrated on Saturday, February 15th. 2



A Carnival Ball will be held on Saturday, February 22nd with a dinner & dance, cash bar and a costume competition with the presentation of trophies.



Dr. Raymond Xerri Addresses the AGM

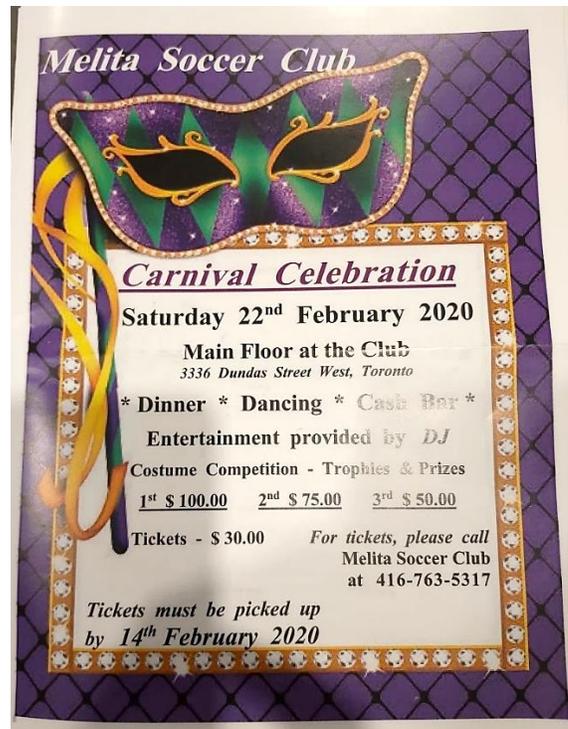
A bus tour to Casino Fallsview, Niagara Falls, ON, will take place on Saturday, February 22nd.

Fenkata (a rabbit stew dinner) will be held on Saturday, March 7th.

Melita Soccer Club

The New Year's Eve Dinner Dance was held at the Club.

An NFL Super Bowl 2020 Party took place at the Club starting at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, February 2nd. There were



A bus tour to Casino Fallsview, Niagara Falls, ON, organized by the Melita Soccer Club, will take place on Saturday, February 29th.

On Saturday, March 7th, the Soccer Team Fundraising Dinner will take place.

The St. Patrick Celebration will be held on Saturday, March 14th.

The St. Paul's Feast Dinner Dance is to take place on February 8th.

Fr. Mario Micallef, MSSP
St. Paul the Apostle Church,
3224 Dundas St. W. Toronto, ON M6P 2A3
1-416-767-7054

St. Paul the Apostle Parish

The Annual Seniors Christmas Dinner, held in Depiro Hall, on Sunday, December 15th, and sponsored by the Maltese Canadian Federation, left the parish with a profit of \$840. The playing of bingo afterwards earned another \$273.

The New Year's Eve Dinner Dance was enjoyed by all: good food, beautiful atmosphere and good company. C. Caruana won the TV in the raffle draw.

The Mission Group held its first meeting of 2020 on Thursday, January 16th. The four special guests were Dr. Andrew Simone, co-founder of Canadian Food for Children; Dr. Raymond Xerri, Consul General of the Republic of Malta in Canada; Joe Scerri, President of the Maltese Canadian Federation; and Fr. Carm Borg, MSSP, former pastor. As the keynote speaker, Dr. Simone shared his family's inspirational journey and lifetime commitment and sacrifice to missionary work. The Group agreed, in consultation with Bishop Giovanni Cefai, MSSP, Territorial Prelate of Santiago Apóstol de Huancané, Peru, that the Group would depart for Huancané on August 15th and return on August 29th. The next meeting was held on Monday, January 27th.

St Paul the Apostle Parish
St Paul's Feast Dinner Dance
 February 8, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.

The Malta Band
 opens the entertainment



Enzo Guzman
 accompanies us throughout
 the night

- Antipasto "hobz biz-zejt"
- lasagna
- Roast beef, baked potatoes, mixed vegetables
- salad
- ice cream
- coffee & pastries
- 2 bottles of wine on table

Bookings:
 Freda 416-762-1891
 or at the Church

Tickets:
 Children 0-5 yrs: free
 Children 5-12 yrs: \$20.00
 Adults: \$45.00

GAMES NIGHT

HOSTED BY ST. PAUL'S THE APOSTLE YOUTH GROUP



ENTRY PER PERSON:
 \$10.00

WHERE: ST PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH
 (3224 DUNDAS STREET WEST)

WHEN: FRIDAY MARCH 6TH, 2020

TIME: DOORS OPEN AT 6:30 PM

TICKET ENTRY INCLUDES:

- ❖ A VARIETY OF GAMES FOR ALL AGES
- ❖ PIZZA DINNER WITH BEVERAGES INCLUDED
- ❖ A FUN TIME FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

Please email stpaulyouthgroup@hotmail.com or
cmfalzon7@gmail.com for any questions.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Raymond Xerri

Huancané 2020 Shoebox Campaign

St. Paul the Apostle Mission Group will be accepting donations of toys, toiletries and food as we start preparing for our mission trip to Huancané, Peru in August 2020. Our goal is to collect enough supplies to fill three hundred shoeboxes by April 19th, 2020.

Suggested toiletry items that will be required are as follows:
 Eye drops , Deodorants , Q-Tips , Baby Wipes , Shampoo ,
 Toothpaste , Toothbrushes , Soap Bars , Dental Floss ,
 Band-aids , Combs , Brushes , Nail Clippers , Aspirin

Food items may include snack bars, canned foods, dried goods,
 juice boxes and any other non-perishable items.

Donations of new toys will be accepted and distributed to the children in Huancané as a separate effort to the shoebox campaign.

**All donations can be deposited in the mission box at the
 back of the church. Thank you in advance for your support!**

London, Ontario

This month's luncheon of members of the Maltese Canadian community and friends was held at the Marconi Club on Thursday, January 23rd. Nearly 60 were in attendance, including some first-timers.



(l to r) Victoria & Albino Ellul, Eileen & Les Jones, Tony & Doris Schembri, Rose Mizzi and Carrie Mizzi

Dan Brock

This year's Mario Vella's Victory Against ALS Dinner Dance will be held at the Marconi Club of London, 120 Clarke Road, on Saturday, March 28th. Tickets are \$50 each.

Windsor, Ontario

Malta United Society of Windsor, Ontario

A Ravioli Dinner was held on the evening of Saturday, January 25th. The next will be on Saturday, February 29th.

The Society's popular wood-fired, oven pizza is back for Saturday, February 8th. Call 519-9974-6719 for tickets.

Metropolitan Detroit

Maltese American Community Club of Dearborn

The General Membership Meeting took place on the afternoon of Sunday, January 26th.

On the occasion of the Festa of St. Paul, Saturday, February 1st, a rabbit dinner was served. One was able to substitute chicken for rabbit.

A Superbowl Party was held downstairs in the bar, beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 2nd. Attendees brought dishes, snacks and appetizers for the potluck.

New York City

Maltese Centre, NYC

An open house to meet and greet was held at the Centre at 11:00 a.m., Sunday December 29th

Its New Year's Eve Gala Dinner Dance took place in the Empire Hall of the Astoria World Manor. There was a 20-

item buffet dinner. DJ Chuck was the MC and provided the entertainment.

The Centre's general meeting and election was held on Sunday, January 26th.

The Center's Chaplain, Fr. Anthony Saliba, will be celebrating Mass, in honour of St. Paul, the patron saint of Malta, in the Upper Hall, on Saturday, February 8th, at 7:00 p.m.

PLAYMOBIL

Dan Brock

Playmobil toys, of a different series than previously, are now available from coast to coast in all 520 Canadian Tire stores.

Malta has one of the three main factories of this company headquartered in Zirndorf, Germany. The Malta plant was set up in 1971 and, with approximately 1,300 employees, is one of the leading manufacturing companies on the island.

The company is located in Hal Far, in the southern part of Malta, close to the Malta International Airport.

Some 2 million Playmobils a week are made at the factory in Hal-Far. Look for the Hal-Far address next time you're in a Canadian Tire store and spot the Playmobil toys.

The Playmobil FunPark, located in Hal Far Industrial Park, was opened on January 1, 1972.

MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY CONSUL GENERAL OF MALTA, LOUIS VELLA*

accessed on January 18, 2020. Reprinted with permission of Mr. Louis J. Vella.

Editor's note: While this message is more than a month old. I believe it's still relevant in informing us of the activities of the Honorary Consul General of Malta in San Francisco and of some of the events within the Maltese American community in the Bay Area.

Hon Consul (HC) Vella was in New York during our last general membership meeting [Sunday, December 29th] and Ms. Mona Vella Nicholas kindly delivered his monthly message.

Good morning and greetings from New York City under a beautiful blue sky, bright sunlight, a light breeze, but bitterly cold. New York is a great, loud, and lively city but the weather this time of year makes one appreciate our Bay Area even more.

During the past few days, I had some very productive meetings with Ambassador Azzopardi who visited our club earlier this year. I also had meetings with his deputy, Mr. Calleja, who is scheduled to visit us next February to process Maltese passport applications. These meetings were held at the Embassy of Malta in Washington DC.

The Ambassador sends fond greetings to the Board of Directors and Members of the Maltese Club as well as all other Maltese organizations and the entire Maltese community in California.

On Sunday November 10th, the Maltese Cross Foundation of California organized a very successful "Remembering Our Loved Ones" event at St. Dunstan Church in Millbrae. A huge thank you to everyone who supported this annual event and all the Maltese organizations who participated. As most of you know, Fr. Joseph Glynn, Pastor of St. Dunstan parish was this year honored with the Maltese Cross Foundation Award. CONGRATULATIONS FR. JOE.

In the SF Bay Area, we are truly blessed that all Maltese groups and organizations support, celebrate, and appreciate each other's missions, efforts and achievements to promote Maltese customs, heritage, and history within this region. WELL DONE.

On behalf of the Office of the Consulate of Malta in San Francisco and my family I would like to end my message this month by wishing you, your families and loved ones very Happy and Safe Thanksgiving holiday.

Grazzi Hafna

Always remember that, it is not what we take but what we give that make us rich.

** This message originally appeared on the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco webpage under "Club News" and was*

NEWS FROM THE MALTESE-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dan Brock

On reading the message of its out-going president Brian Ciappara on the Club's web page, I thought I would share some of his comments with you.

Brian has been the longest continuously serving president of the Club, having been at the helm from 2014 until being succeeded by Joe DeBattista, the president for 2020.

During these six years under Brian's presidency, the Club has celebrated two anniversaries: the 85th in 2014 and the 90th last year. Dr. Joseph Muscat, the then-Prime Minister of Malta, visited the Club in 2014 and in 2018, then-President of Malta, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca was welcomed.

Keith Azzopardi, the Ambassador of Malta for the United States, paid a visit in 2019 and, at the 90th Anniversary celebrations, Debbie Scerri, "an accomplished Maltese singer," was the featured entertainer.

During the past six years, the roof of the building was replaced, a new water heater installed, the dance floor refinished and the kitchen deep cleaned. The refrigerator/freezer had to be replaced towards the end of 2018. A flagpole was also installed in front of the building.

As with many of the Maltese clubs in North America, both past and present, most of the work was accomplished through members who volunteered both their skills and time and through their generous donations.

The last six years were not without other issues, according to Brian. In April 2017, the Club and he were sued in Court by a member who had been expelled from the Club. "He alleged that the Club and the President violated his rights. The Judge decided that his rights were not violated by the Club or by the President, and the case was dismissed with prejudice."

On a more positive note, the Family Bowling Nights and The Second Harvest Food Collection Program were started during these six years thanks to Karen Borg.

In the January issue of *The Maltese Presence in North America* mention was made of the Children's Christmas Party, held at the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco on Saturday, December 14th. Brian noted that the "most beautiful Presepju (Nativity Village)" had been set up by Joe Micallef. George and Rita Borg were Santa and Mrs. Claus. Brian also mentioned the many volunteers who were involved in all aspects of making this Children's Christmas Party the success it was and urged others who "have not offered to volunteer in the past" to step forward. Again, as with many other Maltese clubs, past and present, in North America, all too often, most of the work seems to fall on the same volunteers each time.

KEEPING THE MALTESE CULTURE IN SAN FRANCISCO ALIVE: A HISTORY, A COMMUNITY, AND A CALL FOR SUPPORT

Albert Galea



A journalist with *The Malta Independent* since June 2018, Mr. Galea was co-founder and editor in chief of *The Yuppie*, a student organization based on the University of Malta campus.

Sitting some 15 miles [24 km] south of San Francisco, Millbrae is in many ways a typical American suburban town. However, there are hints of things which set it apart from other such towns; subtle hints such as small stickers of flags and plaques indicating the origin of family names.

Most striking, and perhaps even most out of place however, is a large piece of rock. Adorned with intricately carved patterns and sitting outside the Town Hall, the rock is accompanied by a plaque which explains that it was once part of the Mosta parish church, some 6,700 miles [10 780 km] away.

Millbrae is in fact paired with Mosta – they are sister cities. This owes to the fact that among its 21,000 or so strong population, Millbrae is home to a significant community of Maltese emigrants – a community which is also pockmarked across nearby San Bruno and the marvelous city of San Francisco.

Tucked away just off the main road which passes through Millbrae is an average looking small office block, no more than two storeys, and with signs and service adverts leaning against the full length glass panel that runs across its side. Again, standing out from these is the seal of the Republic of Malta. However, it is not until one enters the building, walks down the main, wood-lined hallway and enters one of the office doors that they find out the reason for this seal's presence.

Indeed, nested at the back of the office of the Millbrae Chamber of Commerce is a small room. "You are now on Maltese territory", Louis Vella says with a smile as he takes his seat behind his desk and under a large, handmade wooden Maltese seal – one of only five ever made.

Despite being halfway across the globe from Malta, Vella isn't technically wrong – his office is one of 13 Honorary Consulates of Malta in the United States, and he is the Honorary Consul for San Francisco and most of the state of California.



Louis J. Vella, Honorary Consul

His job is essentially to be the bridge between the community in the area and the Maltese government. He can sign off on the power of attorney for a person, help them with renewing or acquiring a Maltese passport, or with acquiring dual citizenship, while also representing the community or even the embassy – which is based six-hours away in Washington DC – in certain matters.

However, where does the Maltese presence in California originate from? It is a well known fact that Malta's emigration history is one which spans across many years and many parts of the globe. California is perhaps one of the more far-flung destinations, but in spite of its location, it has played home to Maltese for over 150 years to the 1850s.

The American West was, back then, something of a lawless state when compared to the continent's east coast. Anybody who dared to venture past the city of St. Louis in Missouri was entering practically lawless territory. However, in the 1850s gold was found in the Californian Mountains, giving rise to the gold rush.

Although there is no physical documentation of them, a number of Maltese were among the thousands who flocked to California in the hope of getting rich off of the gold, Vella explains when asked about the origins of the Maltese community in the state.

Documented evidence however shows that there was definitely a Maltese presence in San Francisco by the end of the nineteenth century, and they were present in the city when a third of it was leveled in the famous earthquake of 1906, Vella explained. The city however recovered, and in 1914 and 1915 the World Expo took place in San Francisco showing the Bay Area was open for business.

In that period there was a thriving Maltese community which was mainly based close to the city's port, Vella explains before adding that they had a linguistic advantage; they may not have had fantastic knowledge of English, but at least it was not a totally foreign language to them like it would be to an Italian or Chinese migrant.

In conjunction with San Francisco's revival, the Maltese Protective Society was founded in 1913. "It was brilliant", Vella says; "In a time when there was a lot of work but with a very low level of safety, meaning that a lot of people got hurt

or killed on the job, the society would raise money and step in to help those families whose breadwinner could not work anymore”.

In essence, the Maltese already had a social security system before the actual social security system was even created, Vella says. The Protective Society became the Maltese-American Social Club in November 1929, just over 90 years ago, and it became a one-stop shop for the Maltese community; one could find a job, a partner, a church close by, and everything else that may have been needed through the club, Vella explains. “It was a thriving community”, he says.

The influx of Maltese migrants came in the years that followed the Second World War, Vella said, however as other destinations such as Australia and Canada began to open up to Maltese, owing to them being in the Commonwealth, immigration from Malta to the States started to decrease earlier than it did to other destinations.

In spite of this, there are still a number of Maltese youths coming to San Francisco, primarily to work in the IT industry, Vella says, although he notes that this is not something of a renewed influx.

The Maltese-American Social Club is not the only club in the area; today the Maltese Heritage Association, the Maltese Historical Society, the Sister City Commission, and the St. Elizabeth Maltese Society all exist and are supported by the consulate. The Maltese Cross Foundation is another group; it gives out a grant of \$4000 every year to children of Maltese descent in order to aid them in their studies.

Keeping Maltese culture alive however has not been easy, Vella says. “There was always a certain nucleus of people which keep it alive, but what they do is done by themselves and only themselves – the help actually coming from Malta is very minimal”, he continues before noting that nothing in terms of literature or filmography had ever come from Malta meaning that people had to create things based on their memories of the island.

The club had started to organize activities such as parades and exhibitions, but this perhaps did not take into account the collective feeling towards Malta that the bulk of those emigrating to San Francisco (and elsewhere) had.

“The people who came here after the war didn’t actually have nice memories of Malta. They came from a poor country with no infrastructure and no work, and they wanted to distance themselves from it”, Vella explains.

For instance, he says, these families imposed on their children to speak only in English, with the idea here being that they were now in America and must assimilate with their new home.

Most of those who emigrated after the war hailed from the western side of Malta – from then agricultural villages such as Mosta, Mgarr, Rabat, and Mellieha. This meant, Vella explains, that the traditions they brought with them were largely religious.

The population of first generation migrants is however ageing – one gentleman, Joe Chetcuti, recently turned 100 – but Vella has seen that their grandchildren are developing a

fascination with Malta.

The second generation of Maltese in America are those who were assimilated into the American way of life by their parents, so they have been somewhat cut off from Malta, Vella explains. It is however their children who, by harnessing technology, are discovering the origins of their parents and grandparents and developing a fascination with Malta.

“We could write a book about this because it is a phenomenon”, Vella says.

Aside from this fascination with their roots, these youngsters also have a strong desire for a Maltese passport, Vella says before explaining that this is because of the amount of doors it will open across the pond in Europe.

“The passport is a very strong link in a chain which connects the person to Malta. It ties them to Malta forever. When one of these youngsters stumbles onto something big where they have the chance to invest, that connect can bring investment to the islands and open the doors for their children and grandchildren and those of others”, he says.

One of the highlights of the yearly calendar for the Maltese community is Malta Day which takes place on 21st September – coinciding with Malta’s Independence Day. This is a day dedicated solely to Malta; the Maltese flag is raised at City Hall while trips into the wine country accompanied by explanations of Maltese history are also organized. A reception which attracts a significant crowd – over 200 people and even double that when a special guest, such as the Prime Minister, is in attendance, also forms part of the celebrations.

“The impetus behind this is that while people here cannot become Maltese, their roots are Maltese and we want them to know where they are coming from and teach them what Maltese culture is about”, Vella explains.

“Through Malta Day we try to teach people where they are coming from, and make them proud of being Maltese”, he continues.

The Maltese community is also invited to take part in the annual Columbus Day Parade by the Italian community, and they do so in front of over 100,000 people.

This is where, Vella laments, help from an authority such as the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) can come in handy; “if even one couple goes to Malta as a result of the promotion in such an event, then the money spent is injected back into the economy, but there isn’t the contact unfortunately”.

This is a point which Vella expands upon when asked what he would like to see in the future in terms of support for the Maltese community in San Francisco.

“We would like to see support from entities such as the MTA or Heritage Malta – maybe in terms of finances but also in terms of sending a performer to the area from Malta”, he says. He laments that Maltese performers are generally sent to places such as Toronto or New York on the East Coast, but never reach San Francisco on the West Coast.

It is not the case, he says as he recalls a recent example to back his assertion; “last March, for the first time, we managed to bring over the play *The Star of Strait Street* and to prove that there was the interest, we booked a large auditorium for

it – in spite of the fears of the embassy that we would not manage to fill it”, he says.

“The auditorium was packed; over 500 people came. The actors were astonished – they said it was the biggest audience they had ever performed the play to...and they’ve performed in Australia, Canada, and the UK!”

“This shows that there truly is a thirst for these things. But how long can this thirst last if there isn’t any help? The wheel sometimes needs an injection to help it spin further, and if it comes from Malta, it will be all the better”, he says.

This is perhaps not what Vella wants most however.

“When it comes to America, there is still that certain opinion that those who have left Malta and came here are not Maltese anymore. We are not emigrants – we are Maltese who simply live elsewhere”, he says.

“It took a while for people to get used to that phenomenon; until Malta entered the EU and more Maltese moved to Europe. Since they’re close enough though, that’s fine – for us, who are further, the attitude isn’t the same”, he laments. “Should distance separate us from Malta? No. If I am Maltese and living abroad – be it in Luxembourg or in San Francisco – I am still Maltese”.

**This article appeared in The Malta Independent, December 9, 2019. See independent.com.mt/articles/2019-12-09/localnews/keeping-the-Maltese-culture-in-San-Francisco-alive-A-history-a-community-and-a-call-for-support-6736217280. Printed with permission of editor of The Malta Independent.*

**READER COMMENTS
JANUARY ISSUE**

Your hard work is much appreciated.

Mary Rose Aquilina, Toronto

I am always impressed with your attention to detail and in-depth analysis.

Mark Trzeciak, Metropolitan Detroit

I don't know how you do it. So much information and news worthy events. On behalf of all the Maltese in Michigan we thank you....How proud you make us to be Maltese.

Rena Xuereb, Metropolitan Detroit

Nice work with the newsletter.

Claudia Caruana, New York City

Thanks again for all you do to keep the Maltese community alive.

Lisa LiGreci, Metropolitan Detroit

As usual, I'm amazed about all the interesting articles in your issues.

Carmen Galea, Toronto

Thanks for the newsletter - once more, a great job. Very informative.

Fr. Mario Micallef, MSSP, Toronto

LEHEN MALTI
(Maltese Voice)

OMNI 1 Southern Ontario
Saturdays 8:30 a.m.
Mondays 3:30 a.m.
Tuesdays 11.30 a.m.
Wednesdays 11:00 p.m.
Thursdays 8:30 a.m.

OMNI British Columbia/Pacific
Saturdays 2:00 p.m.

OMNI Alberta/Prairies
Saturdays 2:00 p.m.

MALTESE ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

Festa San Gejtanu Association

c/o 5745 Coopers Avenue, Mississauga, ON
L4Z 1R9
647-232-8845

Festa San Gorg Association of Toronto

c/o 36 Sequoia Road, Vaughan, ON L4H 1W6
905-216-8432/416-277-2291

Gozo Club Toronto

c/o 1205 Royal York Road, Toronto, ON M9A 4B5
416-231-9710
gozoclub@gmail.com

Inanna on Stage

www.joannedancer.com
c/o 356 Pacific Avenue, Toronto, ON M6P 2R1
416-707-2355
desertdancer001@yahoo.ca

Lehen Malti

<https://www.omnitv.ca/shows/lehen-malti>
c/o 2387 Chilsworthy Avenue., Mississauga, ON
L5B 2R4

Malta Band Club

5745 Coopers Ave., Mississauga, ON L4Z 1K9
905-890-8507
www.maltabandclub.com
maltabandclub@bellnet.ca

Malta United Society of Windsor, Ontario

2520 Seminole St., Windsor, ON N8Y1X4
 519-974-6719
maltaunitedsociety.windsor@gmail.com
 Opening hours: Saturday 6:30 p.m.-12:00 a.m.

Maltese American Benevolent Society

1832 Michigan Ave. Detroit, MI 48216
 313-961-8393
<http://detroitmaltese.com>
 Opening hours:
 Thursday & Friday 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
 Saturday 12:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
 Sunday 12:00 p.m. -9:00 p.m.

Maltese American Community Club of Dearborn

5221 Oakman Blvd, Dearborn, MI 48126
 313-846-7077
info@malteseamericanclub.org
 Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday & Friday
 10:00 am. – 1:00 p.m.
 Dinners served: Friday evenings 6:00 p.m. – 10:00
 p.m.
 Before and after 7:00 p.m. first Friday
 Mass

Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco

924 El Camino Real South, San Francisco, CA 94080
 650-871-4611
contact-us@Maltese-AmericanSCSF.org
 Opening hours: Tuesday 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
 (every 2nd Tuesday of the month only)
 Thursday 5: p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
 Friday 5:00 – 1:00 a.m.
 Sunday 9:00 am.- 5:00 p.m.

Maltese Canadian Association of the City of Hamilton**Maltese Canadian Association (Gozo)****Maltese Canadian Business & Networking Association (MCBNA), (Toronto)**

c/o 2387 Chilsworthy Avenue, Mississauga, ON
 L5B 2R4
 416-980-1975
mcbna2018@gmail.com

Maltese-Canadian Cruisers

c/o 5745 Coopers Avenue, Mississauga, ON
 L4Z 1R9
 416-524-2573
 att: Gianni Borg

Maltese-Canadian Cultural Association (Est. 2018)

c/o 2387 Chilsworthy Avenue, Mississauga, ON
 L5B 2R4
 416-571-3944
joeshherri@rogers.com

Maltese Canadian Federation, The (Toronto)

c/o 2387 Chilsworthy Avenue, Mississauga, ON
 L5B 2R4
 416-571-3944
joeshherri@rogers.com

Maltese-Canadian Museum Archives and Visitors Centre

St. Paul the Apostle Church Complex
 3224 Dundas St. W., Toronto, ON M6P 2A3
 416-767-7054

Maltese Canucks

c/o 3336 Dundas Street West, Toronto, ON,
 M6P 2A4
 416-909-7357/414-670-2662
carl@isgtransport.com/b_azzo18@yahoo.com

Maltese Center, NYC

27-20 Hoyt Ave. S. Astoria, NY 11102
 718-728-9893
info@maltesecenter.com
 Opening hours:
 Wednesday and Friday 5:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.
 Saturday and Sunday 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Maltese Cross Foundation of California

PO Box 698, San Carlos, CA 94070

Maltese Culture Club of Durham

c/o 124 Ribblesdale Drive, Whitby, ON L1N 7C8
 289-939-8377
mmmpastizzi@gmail.com

Maltese Heritage Association San Francisco Bay Area

maltesheritageassociation@gmail.com

Maltese Historical Society (San Francisco)**Melita Soccer Club**

3336 Dundas St. W., Toronto, ON M6P 2A4
 416-763-5317
msc@melitasoccerclub.com
 Opening hours:
 Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
 Friday 6:00 p.m.-1:00 a.m.
 Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
 Sunday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

St. Paul the Apostle Parish

3224 Dundas St. W. Toronto, ON M6P 2A3
 416-767-7054
stpaulmssp@gmail.com
www.saint-paul-maltese.com

St. Paul the Apostle Youth Group (Toronto)

3224 Dundas Street West, Toronto, ON M6P 2A3
 647-524-1115
jason.borg@hotmail.ca/sborg@rogers.com

**NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATIONS 2019-20
MALTESE-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO**



Members of One of the Tables



A View of Most of Those in Attendance



Dancing the Conga



**Outgoing President Brian Ciappara
Wishes Everyone a Happy New Year**



Welcoming in 2020