

THE MALTESE PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA



E-NEWSLETTER

Issue 24 MARCH 2021

MAKING FAGOLLI NORTH AMERICAN STYLE



(See recipe on pages 17-21)

**The Maltese Presence
in North America**

Issue No. 24 March 2021

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

More comments were made about the February newsletter than any previous issue, particularly the article by Richard Cumbo on the history of the Maltese television programs in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Michael Cutajar's account of his father. (See pages 8-9.) In this issue Richard has an article on the Miss Malta Pageants of Toronto for the years 1967-2007. At 7.5 pages, it is the longest piece yet to appear in the newsletter. (See pages 21-28.) Unlike several articles in previous issues, I didn't believe it should be presented over two issues. Moreover, most of the piece is given over to photographs and other illustrations which should bring back happy memories to many of readers in the GTA.

Speaking about length, Lisa Buttigieg LiGreci's figolli recipe covers 4.5 pages, 5.5 if we include the outside front cover. (See pages 1, 17-21.) A great debt is owed to Lisa for the time, effort and creativity she

puts into these traditional Maltese recipes with a North American twist.

I'm grateful to Charles Buttigieg for sharing with the newsletter his commemoration of the 50th anniversary of *Dar L'Emigrant*. (See pages 10-11.) As Consul General Dr. Raymond Xerri notes in his March message—see pages 14-16—"this place is so dear and precious to all present and future generations of Maltese and Gozitans around the world...".

Carmen Vella, Archivist of the Society of the Sacred Heart Malta, has uncovered yet more information on the young women who went to Jamaica and joined the Sisters of Mercy. (See pages 6-8.) Plans are now in the works, together with Mark Caruana of Australia and myself, for the three of us to do a study of the members of Malta's Society of the Sacred Heart who went to Chicago in the 1930s.

A notice or poster which appeared several months ago on Facebook, via The National Archives of Malta, led to the article on the Lenten Mission held in Detroit in March 1921. Thanks to the much water-damaged passport application of Padre James Baldacchino, it was possible to identify the priest sitting between Fathers George Caruana and Michael Borg and to more accurately date the photo found on page 120 of Fr. Lawrence Attard's *Beyond Our Shores*. (See pages 5-6, 32)

As I worked on the three clergymen noted above, Mark Caruana pointed me in the direction of Fr. Spiridione Oscar Grech, and this in turn led to the article on page 8. (See also page 32.)

Joe Sherri of Toronto has provided us with an update on the 200-bed, long-term facility at the Runnymede Healthcare Centre in Toronto which will specifically allocate a certain number of beds to members of the Maltese Canadian community in the GTA. He has also provided us with an example of the longtime connection between the Maltese Canadian community and Runnymede Hospital. (See page 4.)

As always, I'm grateful for the

weekly bulletins received from St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Toronto and the inspiring words of its pastor, Fr. Mario Micallef. (See page 3.)

Owing to the current pandemic there is still not too much to report by way of community activities.

All issues and the latest "Table of Contents" are posted on the web page of the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco at <http://maltese-americanscsf.org/home.aspx>,

thanks to Evelyn and Dennis Simmons of California.

I may be reached at dbrock40@worldline.ca, be it ideas you wish to share, wishing to be put on the free, bcc, electronic mailing list, etc.

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GLEANINGS FROM THE SUNDAY BULLETIN

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS...



Fr. Mario Micallef, MSSP, 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.

Let Us Allow Jesus into Our Lives

...[Jesus] got up very early in the morning, "when it was still very dark," to go to a deserted place and pray. Jesus needed this time with His Father. This has to be the source and strength of the life of any follower of Jesus. I cannot do it on my own. I need God's help. Time spent with God is not time wasted. Pope Francis gives us a beautiful example in his life by rising up very early every morning for two whole hours of prayer before he begins his day.

The message for us today is twofold. Let us allow Jesus in our lives, giving Him ample time, so that we can experience His loving presence and healing touch. Then let us look around us. There we will surely find people whom we can help and serve. Through us, His disciples, they can come to experience that same love of Jesus that we received.

Faith is Something to Live and to Share

[Faith] is not merely something for me to keep. Rather, it is something to live and to share. The gift of faith our ancestors had received from Paul has been handed on to us through many generations.

It is up to us, now, to live it and share it. This would be the best way to thank and honor this great Apostle for what he gave us.

Let Us Make Good Use of This Beautiful Time in the Church's Calendar

During this past year we have been living what have been probably the most unusual twelve months of our lives. The present pandemic has robbed us of many things which used to give us comfort and security. Gatherings, hugs, parties, and many other things which we used to take for granted

are things of the past and, hopefully, of the not-too-distant future. With these we can add the celebration of the sacraments, our coming to Mass, and our coming together as a Christian community to celebrate significant events or to just enjoy each other's presence. We can say that, spiritually, we have been cast into a desert!

The arrival of Lent can help us make some sense out of all this. Temptations to lose hope, to get depressed, to lose faith are very real. In the desert, Jesus, too, was tempted. During Lent the Church gives us some tools which help us not just to overcome these temptations but to come out better from this experience. These are what we traditionally know as prayer, fasting and almsgiving. By prayer I am reminding myself that I need God in my life. More than that, God is the one essential that I really do need. Then fasting helps me understand that I can actually live without so many things in my life which I tend to think are indispensable. I remember this is something I realized many years ago when I went on my first missionary experience in the mountain regions of the Andes in Peru. There I learnt that I could easily live, and live well, without many things which I used to think were important in my life. Finally, almsgiving, or charity, reminds me that I only live as a Christian when I reach out to others, and share with them whatever God has gifted me with. Selfishness and Christianity do not live together.

The first message of Jesus after coming out of the desert was that the Kingdom of God has arrived, and a call to everyone to believe the good news. The good news is that, by his death and resurrection (which we will be celebrating at the end of Lent) Jesus made it possible again for us to live in harmony with our God, with each other, and indeed, with ourselves! This is what we were created for, as beautifully illustrated in the first pages of the bible through the story of creation. There, before the fall, human beings (represented by Adam and Eve), lived in perfect communion with God, who would come to join them for a stroll in the cool evenings, with each other and with nature around them.

Let us make good use of this beautiful time in the Church's calendar. Let us pray that when Easter comes, whether we will celebrate it together or not, it will be for each and every one of us a celebration of a better me.

Mgr. Paolo Gauci, a delegate from Malta to the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago, visited the Maltese in Toronto in early August 1926. He urged his listeners "to be loyal first to God."

READER TO READER

The Maltese Canadian Federation is pleased to announce that the dream of having a number of beds in the long-term facility of Rummymede Hospital, dedicated to the Maltese community in the Greater Toronto Area, is finally becoming a reality.

For the past few years, the Maltese Canadian Federation has been pursuing the possibility of acquiring some long-term beds for the Maltese community. The opportunity came along when a submission was made by Runnymede Hospital in Toronto to have a 200 long term bed addition added to the existing Hospital. The Maltese Canadian Federation took the lead in supporting this project together with the support of past and present Maltese General Consulates, St Paul's Church and other Maltese community members. The Maltese Canadian Federation and its representatives were given the opportunity to attend bylaw and zoning meetings in order to highlight how vital this project was for the Maltese community.

The driving force behind this project was none other than the CEO of Runnymede Hospital Mrs. Connie (Galea) Dejak. Through her sheer determination and hard work, this project was finally approved by the government of Ontario and with great joy the Maltese Canadian Federation was notified that a number of beds would be dedicated to the Maltese community.

On Tuesday, February 16th, the shovels went into the ground to start the construction on this 200-bed long term facility with a completion date of the middle of 2023. The Maltese Canadian Federation looks forward with anticipation for the completion of this facility, to see a number of Maltese seniors settled in there and to keep them connected to the community by organizing Maltese community events for them and visitations by Maltese community volunteers.

Thank you
Joe Sherri
President
Maltese Canadian Federation

THE MALTESE CANADIAN FEDERATION AND RUNNYMEDE HOSPITAL

Joe Sherri

One of the examples of the Maltese Canadian Federation's connection with Runnymede Hospital has been the organization of the annual Christmas Concert.

Below are two photos taken at the concert held in 2017.



**Federation's Representatives
with Hospital Representatives**



**The Maltese Language Class Performing
under the Direction of Carmen Galea**

Another participant in these concerts has been the Malta Band.



Runnymede Healthcare Centre

LENTEN MISSION FOR THE MALTESE HELD 100 YEARS AGO IN DETROIT*

Dan Brock

March 2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the Lenten mission held for the Maltese in Detroit. This mission was held from Sunday, March 6th to Sunday, March 13th, beginning three weeks before Easter, in 1921 in the newly-established St. Paul's Maltese ethnic parish.

The parish had been established only a few months earlier by Michael J. Gallagher the bishop of Detroit. The first parish priest was Fr. Michael Borg, a native of Vittoriosa, Malta, who arrived in Detroit in early November 1920 and celebrated the parish's first Mass on November 14th in the former Knights of Equity Hall on Second Avenue and Fort Street, a few blocks to the southeast of the City's Corktown.

In organizing a Lenten mission for the Maltese of Detroit he enlisted the help of two of his acquaintances, Fr. George Caruana, the pastor of the parish in Corona Heights, NY and the Capuchin friar James Baldacchino who was then working in New York City.

Fr. George Joseph Caruana, a native of Sliema, Malta, had first arrived in the United States in mid-June 1910 and was assigned to Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Brooklyn. In 1919 he had visited the Maltese community in Detroit and celebrated Mass in Maltese at Most Holy Trinity Church on the northeast corner of Porter and Sixth streets in Corktown. A few months after the Lenten mission, Fr. Caruana was named bishop of Puerto Rico.

Padre James Baldacchino was born in Floriana, Malta and was known as Emanuele before becoming a Capuchin and taking the name "James". He arrived in New York City in January 1919.

A notice of the mission was printed in Maltese and presumably distributed within Detroit's Maltese community. Fortunately, a copy of this notice made its way to the National Archives of Malta in Rabat.

What follows is an English translation of the notice, followed by a reproduction of the notice itself.

Notice of Mission

In Memory of

The First Mission in Detroit
for Maltese

Given by the Preachers

Fr George Caruana

Parish Priest of Corona Heights NY
and by

Fr James from Malta

a Capuchin Friar

Under the Auspices
Of the Maltese Parish Priest
Fr Michael Borg
At the Church of
St Paul's Maltese Parish
Detroit, Mich. U. S. A.

Maxims

Always remember, mortal man, that you should be prepared at all times for the day you will die you do not know.

Remember that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.

Remember the ugliness of sin, the beauty of virtue and the happiness and suffering in eternity. --

From the 6th to the 13th March 1921



Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta

As to the mission itself, it appears, according to the *Detroit News* of March 20th, that "In order to accommodate the immense number of worshippers, additional services are being held daily."

Unfortunately, beyond the notice found in the National Archives of Malta and what is found on page 44 of Fr. Lawrence E. Attard's *The Great Exodus* (1918-1939), little has been gleaned to add to this account. Nothing was found on line in the *Detroit Free Press* for the month of March 1921.

The one exception, however, is a photograph of Father Borg and Caruana and "another priest from Malta" which was taken at a studio in "Detroit, c. 1921" according to the late Fr. Attard in his *Beyond Our Shores A Panorama of Maltese Migration* (page 120). A water-damaged photograph of Padre James Baldacchino on his December 1918 passport application (see page 32) identifies the priest seated in the photo below as Baldacchino and confirms that this photograph could only have been taken while the three clergymen were together for the March 1921 Lenten Mission.



Fr. George Caruana, Padre James Baldacchino and Fr. Michael Borg

Fr. Lawrence Attard, *Beyond Our Shores*, p. 120

* I wish to thank Chip Martin of London, Ontario for accessing the March 1921 issues of the *Detroit Free Press* and to Mark Caruana of New South Wales for providing an English translation of the notice.

MORE DISCOVERIES FOUND IN THE SACRED HEART MALTA ARCHIVES PERTAINING TO THE WOMEN WHO WENT TO JAMAICA

Dan Brock, Carmen Vella and Mark Caruana

Since the issuing of the February 2021 newsletter, it has been learned that two other young women, in addition to **Adelina Borg (Sr. Madeline Sophie)** had attended Rosary School, operated by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in St. Julian's, before going to Jamaica and joining the Sisters of Mercy.

The first was **Georgina Borg**. She was born in Msida on April 21, 1892 and resided there at the time she left for Kingston, Jamaica, in 1913, in company with Maria Assunta Cauchi and Mary Sargent.

It was not until 1915 that photographs were required for passport applications. We are fortunate, however, that a photograph of Georgina Borg, before she left Malta for Jamaica, has been preserved in the Archives of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart.



Courtesy of Society of the Sacred Heart Malta Archives

As noted in the October 2020 issue of this newsletter, Georgina joined the Sisters of Mercy in Jamaica, took the name **Sr. M. Agnes** and was known to have "worked zealously on the wards at Bumper Hall during the time of the Spanish influenza." It was also noted that she died on the island on July 29, 1929, and was interred in Kingston's Calvary Cemetery.

It has since been learned that as Sr. M. Agnes, RSM, the former Georgina Borg had had photographs taken at the studio of Cleary & Elliott, in Kingston, Jamaica and had sent two photo postcards thereof to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart back in St. Julian's, Malta.



Sr. M. Agnes RSM (Georgina Borg), 1920

Courtesy of Society of the Sacred Heart Malta Archives

Another student of Rosary School found to have joined the Sisters of Mercy in Jamaica was **Mary Bajada**. She was born in Sliema on December 27, 1912. It was probably before Christmas of 1929 that, like Adelina Borg noted in the February 2021 issue, she went to a studio where the passport application photo in the next column was taken.

Again, like Adelina Borg, she gave one of the photocards produced at the studio to the Sisters at Rosary School. (See next column.)

It was in 1930 that **Mary Bajada**, along with Jessie Ellul, Stella Cachia and Mary Sciortino, left Malta by way of England for Jamaica.

As also noted in the issue of October 2020, Mary

Bajada became known as **Sr. Raphael** within the community of the Sisters of Mercy. As a teacher, her career took her to St. Anthony's Prep School, Port Antonio, Mt. St. Joseph's Prep, Alpha Prep, Alpha Boys School, St. Mary's Sav-la-Mar, Columbus in Ocho Rios and Mt. Mercy Kinder Prep.

In 1942 she worked with other Sisters at the Gibraltar Camp for refugees, Unable to leave the camp, she opened a school for the children, prepared them for the sacraments and organized clubs, occasional picnics and movies. She also visited the sick in the Camp Hospital.



Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta



Courtesy of Society of the Sacred Heart Malta Archives

Sr. Raphael was known for her good sense of humour. In 1990 she became a Jamaican citizen. Five years later, on September 15, 1995, she died of pneumonia and, like Sr. M. Agnes, was buried in Calvary Cemetery.

Thus, we now know that at least three of the students—namely Adelina Borg, Georgina Borg and Mary Bajada —attending the Rosary School in St. Julian's, run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, later went to Jamaica and joined the Sisters of Mercy.

Our gratitude goes out to the members of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart community in years past for the preservation of such records and to those currently responsible for allowing these precious documents to be shared with the public in this newsletter.

**TRACING THE WHEREABOUTS OF A
MEMBER OF A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY
IN THE UNITED STATES:
FR. SPIRIDIONE OSCAR GRECH, O. CARM**

Dan Brock

The 1935 year book for Mount Carmel High School, an all-boys' Catholic High School operated by the Carmelite order of priests and brothers in Chicago's Woodlawn neighbourhood, contains a photograph of Fr. Spiridione Grech, O. Carm, its chaplain.



Fr. Spiridione was born in Valletta, Malta on

August 12, 1892, the son of Gaetano and Giuditta Grech.

He was a student, attached to the Carmelite Convent in Valletta, when he applied for a passport to Rome. Ten years later, while still at the Carmelite Convent in Valletta, he applied for a passport to Canada. His purpose simply states "mission." Whether he was going to give a mission in Canada or was to serve as a missionary in that country is unknown.

It doesn't appear that the Maltese community in Toronto was part of his "mission." On August 5th, of the same year Mgr. P. Gauci, while on a visit to Toronto, wrote that "the last Maltese priest to stay in Toronto was in March last year."

It appears then that after arriving in Montreal on July 5th of 1926, Fr. Spiridione made his way directly to Niagara Falls, Ontario and the Carmelite Monastery there. In any case, he gave his last residence as Niagara Falls on crossing into the United States on the 24th of the same month. His destination was St. Clara's Church on Woodlawn Avenue in Chicago.

Fr. Spiridione continued to reside in Chicago and by 1930 resided at 6427 Woodland Avenue which was near Mount Carmel High School where he was probably on staff. His parents were living in Paola when he returned for a visit in the late spring of that year.

His father appears to have died by 1934 when Fr. Spiridione again paid a visit to Malta. While in Malta he stayed at the Carmelite Convent in Valletta.

In August 1937, Fr. Spiridione again visited Malta and stayed at the Monastery in Paola. He returned to Chicago in late November.

The last I have learned of Fr. Spiridione was when he was serving in St. John the Evangelist Church on Broad Avenue in Leonia, NY.

READER COMMENTS

You've really surpassed yourself, fabulous issue
....

Richard S. Cumbo, Toronto

Real nice work on the issue!

Mike Cutajar, Metropolitan Detroit

This is all fascinating stuff. Well done all. Also my personal best wishes to an ex-colleague Ray Xerri (Melbourne and Malta Uni) Keep up the good work.

Henry Frendo, University of Malta

I wholeheartedly join my colleague and ex-mentor Professor Frendo.

Raymond Mangion, University of Malta

Wow, this might be the longest one yet, lot of hours and hard work

Thank you for still doing this.

Melrose Paquet, London, ON

I have been reading with great interest your magazine and have ended up reading not only the parts where the first Maltese women joined the Sisters of Mercy in Jamaica but all the rest of them! Well done for your hard work. You must be bringing joy to many Maltese who must miss my tiny island so much.

Carmen Vella,
Society of the Sacred Heart Malta Archives

With interest I read the article of Chev Richard S Cumbo in your e-newsletter February 2021 issue, in particular I read pages 21 to 24, wherein you wrote about the only Maltese Canadian TV program, and how it is now running into it's 50th year anniversary.

What a great history you have achieved. It is always interesting how the volunteer work force really is such a success in a lot of the areas around the world where the Maltese Diaspora is spread, as the article proves.

Yes as you mentioned in the article the only Maltese TV Program here in Australia, is the one I produce and direct, and it is the only program that has a weekly spot on Foxtel Aurora Channel 173, original show goes out on Saturday's 1.30 pm and 3 repeats follow that, on Sunday at 6.00 pm, Monday's 5.00 pm and Tuesday's 8.00 am all local Sydney times.

Joe Borg, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Richard, I can never stop saying "prosit u prosit tassew" for your proficient and very interesting article about the Maltese Programs on Cable Television in Toronto. Of course, I'm very much impressed, enjoyed reading the article a lot, and I can fully understand that you did an excellent job, and it wasn't easy at all. It took a lot of your time. You ought to be commended in writing this article.

Carmen Galea, Toronto

Dear Richard,

As promised, I read your article about the Maltese TV programme, today called *Leñen Malti*. An informative article indeed, and God Bless You for collecting such information.

It is admiring how such a programme still goes on in Canada, considering that there is the third or fourth generation of Maltese manning this programme. Unfortunately, programmes regarding the Maltese culture, history, and activities are rarely followed in Malta, let alone the challenge faced

abroad. These programmes give an insight on our past and present and proudly I say, we really have a lot to offer. Fingers crossed that such potential is recognised more especially by the young ones, through education.

I am astonished by the number of interviews you had and all the experiences you encountered. You really exploited the chance in sharing the knowledge you acquired. WELL DONE and I am HONORED to have a dear friend like you!!!

Dorothy Vassallo, Malta

I read the TV article. It is well constructed and very informative. Prosit.

Victor Grech, Malta

You [Mike Cutajar] did an outstanding job on this project [the account of Felix Cutajar]. Thank you so much for sharing it with me.

Janet Stover, Canton, Michigan

I wish the whole lot of the work comprising "The Maltese Presence in North America" be printed in a book. I would be pleased to buy a copy.

Carmelo Cutajar, Malta

What a delight to read Richard Cumbo's article on the history and evolution of the Maltese Program 'Lehen Malti' in Toronto. Richard is such a key contributor in the Maltese community and I personally love his articles because they are always informative and his research is meticulous and impeccable.

Johnnie Vella, Toronto

Thanks very much for your work on the newsletter; it is very much appreciated.

Cindy Billard, Malta

On Monday, 3:30 p.m. EST, March 8, 2021, the Maltese Center: Astoria will present its live ZOOM show *Il-Maltin Taghna* with **Thomas J. Grech**, President & CEO of Queens Chamber of Commerce. This Chamber of Commerce is the oldest and largest business association in the Borough. He is a graduate of the University of Scranton, Scranton, PA with a BS in Accounting and received his MBA in International Business from Manhattan College, Riverdale, NY.

Tom is a third-generation Maltese American. His paternal grandparents, **Charles Grech** and **Rose Vella** were married in Manhattan on June 25, 1925. Charles was born in Malta on March 13, 1896 and appears to have been a crew member of the *Olen* which docked in New York Harbor on November 11, 1922. Rose was born in Gibraltar about 1894.

**DAR L-EMIGRANT'S 50TH
ANNIVERSARY:
A FITTING TRIBUTE**

Charles Buttigieg



Charles' article, "Malta Migration Museum," appeared in the September 2019 issue of this newsletter. Later in 2019, his biography of Mgr Philip Calleja was published.

February 10, 2021, marks the 50th anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone of Dar l-Emigrant, Castile Place, Valletta.

The building was erected as a permanent symbol of Maltese tribute to Maltese emigrants and a monument witnessing Malta's bond with them.

Its foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Dr George Borg Olivier, and blessed by Archbishop Mgr Michael Gonzi.

This special anniversary is a very timely opportunity to express appreciation to all those who have always had the best interests of Maltese emigrants and their families at heart, primarily Mgr Philip Calleja, the indefatigable former leader of the Emigrants' Commission.



The Laying of the Foundation Stone, February 10, 1971

Mgr Calleja dedicated his life to uprooted people, first as the champion of post-war Maltese migrants

and their families and then as the leading pioneer defender of refugees seeking protection and help in

Malta.

Up to March 2020, at the venerable age of 91, Mgr Calleja was still regularly making himself available at Dar l-Emigrant to help whoever knocked on his door seeking his advice or assistance. It was only the Covid-19 pandemic and the indispensable precautions that had to be taken, that kept him away from Dar l-Emigrant and what is most dear to him—helping others.

The late very able researcher and historian Fr Lawrence Attard OP, writing in the *Times of Malta* of June 24, 1975, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Emigrants' Commission, said as follows:

The history of migration from these islands, especially post-war migration, is now to a great extent the history of the Emigrants' Commission. That Commission was providentially fortunate in that since 1953 it has had as its driving force, Mgr Philip Calleja, who since then has dedicated his priestly life to migrants and to all people whose life has been affected by emigration.

The enthusiasm of Mgr Calleja has inspired a dedicated group of people who willingly offer their services to prospective migrants, to their dependents and to Maltese abroad. These services are given to all who seek the help of the Commission; no fees are charged, no irrelevant questions asked and the whole procedure is conducted by experienced priests and lay people in total privacy.

Mgr Calleja enjoys various international and local recognitions for his lifelong sterling work for Maltese emigrants and asylum seekers reaching Malta.

On March, 16, 2010, Dr Stephen Gatt, President of the Federation of Maltese Living 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."

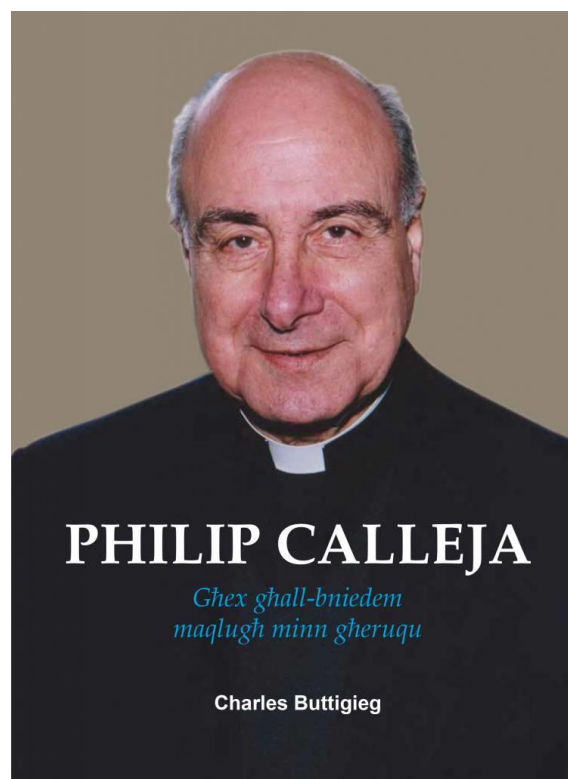
Mgr Calleja was also granted a September 23, 2004 certification by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) "in appreciation for years of dedicated service and close collaboration".

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.

On November 1, 2019, Mgr Calleja was also honoured by the University of Malta, acclaiming him "a meritorious candidate for the Degree of Master of Letters (Honoris Causa) of this *Alma Mater*."

In its motivation, the University recognised "the significant contribution made by Philip Calleja to the

social wellbeing of our communities, especially through his persevering commitment to the welfare of migrants and his contribution to the process of relocation; through his role as founder of the Emigrants' Commission and of Dar l-Emigrant to serve as a hub to meet the holistic needs of migrants; and a person who had the foresight to act in favour of immigrants and to create services out of sheer altruism and love for humanity."



**Front Cover of
Mgr Philip Calleja's 2019 Biography**

Through the commitment and hard work of Mgr Alfred Vella, Mgr Calleja's successor as Director of the Emigrants' Commission, Dar l-Emigrant today also houses a digital Migration Museum, which was intended to be officially opened in 2020, but the event had to be postponed because of the pandemic. Fifty years on, the edifice is a fitting tribute not only to Maltese emigrants, but also to its founder, Mgr Philip Calleja, who became known as "The Emigrants' Priest" and "The Refugees' Samaritan".

*A letter survives written from New York in 1797 by **Marcello Mallia** to his parents in Ghaxaq, Malta. It was his first letter to them in several years. He had previously been in the West Indies and in Florida.*

THE UNFORTUNATE PAUL SCIBERRAS

Dan Brock

Near the northwest corner of the older section of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Cemetery in London, Ontario, is the flat gravestone of Paul Sciberras.



Paul had immigrated to Canada in 1954 with Albert Grech, also of Valletta, having disembarked from the *Nea Hellas* in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on March 27th. Both men were single. Paul was born on October 16, 1934 and Albert "Berty" on March 30, 1935.

Berty was a cousin of Catherine "Katie" Cachia who was living in London, Ontario. Together, Berty and Paul were bringing wedding gifts from the family for Katie, who was to marry Roger Harmsworth on May 15th of that year.

For a time, Paul boarded, on the south side of Simcoe Street, between Colborne and Maitland, with Felix and Maria Cassar, Maria being Katie's "Kitty's" sister. Paul worked at Robinson Industrial-Crafts Ltd., at the southeast corner of Wellington Road and Chester Street in South London, by 1955. By 1956, Paul was working at the Canada Bread Company, on the north side of South Street, west of Wellington, and boarding with Tony and Rose Vassallo, at the northwest corner of Cathcart Street and Devonshire Avenue in South London. Young Carmelo Vassallo, Tony and Rose's son, also worked as a helper at the bakery. Later, he was to become an accomplished London photographer.

Paul, described many years later by Kitty Harmsworth as a "good looking young man," was living with Walter and Martha Attard, on the north side of Dreaney Avenue, between Nelson and Layard in East London, prior to developing headaches. These became so severe that he was admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital, at the northeast corner of Grosvenor and Richmond streets in North London. As he

did not have any hospital insurance, he ended up in a basement ward. He was later transferred to Victoria Hospital on the south side of South Street, between Waterloo and Colborne, where he died of cancer on March 3, 1957.

Being one of the first of Maltese immigrants since 1948 to die in London and being without any family there, the Maltese Canadian Club London – Ontario undertook to see that Paul's family back in Malta was informed and that funeral arrangements were made.

Father Pat Costello, of St. Mary's Church on the northwest corner of Lyle and York streets in East London, was given the address of Paul's parents in Valletta. The curate then sent a telegram notifying them of their son's death. Two days after the telegram arrived, the family received Paul's last two letters to them. All this had such an impact on the mother that she had to be taken to a mental hospital.

The Club paid for a death notice in the local newspaper, *The London Free Press*, and may have done so in newspapers in Malta as well.

It also arranged for Fr. Albert Vella, O.F.M., of St Paul the Apostle Church in Toronto, to come to London to celebrate the Requiem High Mass for Paul. Meanwhile, Paul's remains had been taken to the E.C. Killingsworth Funeral Home on the southwest corner of Burwell and Dundas streets. The Rosary was recited there on the evening prior to the funeral itself on March 7th. The pallbearers were Berty Grech, Walter Attard, Charlie Pace, the barber, and Julian Farrugia who operated the Club's bar. Presumably two staff members of the Funeral Home helped to carry the coffin. Father Vella also conducted the graveside service at St. Peter's Cemetery.

George Mizzi, president of the Club, had been in communication with Paul's family at 380/3, Old Mint Street. Emanuel "Leli" Attard had written to his own father, who in turn shared Emanuel's letter with the Sciberras family.

Father Philip Calleja*, then secretary of Malta Catholic Action, at Palazzo Carafa, 94, Old Bakery Street, was acquainted with the Sciberras family and wrote a letter to Leli Attard on March 12th, the same day as did Paul's father, Emanuel Sciberras. Both expressed gratitude to the Club for having "taken care of everything imaginable – funeral, high-mass, interment, belongings, insurance and all."

Leli replied to the Sciberras letter on March 18th and to Fr. Calleja's the following day. In the former letter was an itemized account of all Paul's worldly possessions and a request as to what to do with them. Among the possessions were four pairs of

women's stockings Paul had bought for his sisters but had not yet sent to them.

The fact that Paul's mother was now in a mental hospital presented a slight snag, as she was to be the beneficiary of her son's \$1,000 life insurance policy. It would appear that George Mizzi and Fr. Vella acted as unofficial executors of the estate.

As to the correspondence cited above, these letters or carbon copies thereof were found, nearly 50 years ago, among the scattered papers of the Maltese Canadian Club London on the dust-covered floor of its former rented and long unused quarters on the site of the present Court House Building on the north side Dundas Street, between Ridout and Talbot. These papers were gathered up

by the wrecking company tearing down the old building and given to the then Regional Collection of The D.B. Weldon Library at London's University of Western Ontario. They are currently housed in the Western Archives and Research Collection, The D.B. Weldon Library, at the renamed Western University.

** See further information relating to Fr. (now Mgr.) Calleja on pages 7-8. Fr. Calleja had witnessed the large group of immigrants leaving the Grand Harbour on board the Vulcania in June 1948. Among those immigrants were the aforementioned Leli Attard, Felix Cassar, Roger Harmsworth and Charlie Pace.*

JUM IL-ĦELSIEN (FREEDOM DAY) OBSERVED IN TORONTO,

Richard S. Cumbo

Jum il-Ħelsien (Freedom Day) marks the withdrawal of the British Forces from Malta on March 31, 1979.



Celebration and Reception, March 31, 1981.

Hosted by John Pisani, Maltese Trade Commissioner in Toronto, and His Wife, Maria The Main Leaders of the Maltese Canadian Community and Volunteers Were Invited, as well as Yuri Shymko, MPP and Gayle Christie, Mayor of the Borough of York

Front row: Miriam Sammut, Alfred Camilleri, Joe Gatt, Maria Pisani (with cake),

?, John Pisani, Henry Formosa, Michael Baldacchino, ?,

Back row: Alfred Goggi, Paul DeBattista, Charles Mizzi, Edward Scicluna, Richard Cumbo (with glasses), Tony Parnis, Victor Grech, Josephine Dingli, Margaret Micallef, Leo Vassalo, Enzo Gusman (with glasses), Charles Aquilina, Alfred Vella

(Photo by Joe Camilleri)



**Taken in the Office of the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto (M.C.S.T.),
3278 Dundas Str., W., Toronto, March 31, 1990,
during a Visit from Gozitan Bishop Nicholas Cauchi.
L. to R. Raymond Borg, M.C.S.T. President, Bishop Cauchi.
Denise Neville, M.C.S.T. Miss Malta - 1990 and Richard Cumbo, M.C.S.T. General Secretary.
Denise's Mother, Margaret Tonna, was M.C.S.T. Miss Malta – 1968**

MONTHLY MESSAGE FROM THE CONSUL GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA TO CANADA

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



Il-Konsolat Ġenerali ser jerġa jiftaħ fit-8 ta' Marzu

Deġlin fit-tielet xahar tas-sena u l-imxija għadha b'saħħitha u għadna fil-lockdown. Minkejja dan kollu u minħabba li n-numri tal-każijiet qed gradwalment jonqsu fil-Provinċja ta' Ontario, ir-restrizzjonijiet jippermettulna li noperaw bħala Konsolat Ġenerali.

Għalhekk nhar it-Tnejn, 8 ta' Marzu 2021 il-Konsolat Ġenerali ser terġa tiftaħ sabiex tagħti s-servizzi kollha minbarra l-*Consul-on-the-Move* li għalissa ma'

The Consulate General will reopen on March 8

As we enter the third month of the year, COVID-19 is still strong and we are still in a relative lockdown. Despite all this the number of COVID-19 cases in Ontario has been gradually decreasing again. Current restrictions permit the Consulate General to operate.

Therefore, the Consulate General will open as of Monday, March 8, 2021 offering all services except for the *Consul-on-the-Move*, which for now cannot be offered owing to the different restrictions in differ-

jistax jingħata minħabba d-differenzi fir-regolamenti tal-ivvjaġġar fid-diversi provinċji u territorji Kanadiżi. Nagħmel dan il-punt ċar daqs il-kristal, kulhadd irid ikollu appuntament sabiex jiġi l-Konsolat sabiex jinqed. L-unika eċċezzjoni hija meta l-każ huwa ta' natura urġenti ħafna u m' hemmx triq oħra għajr li ċċempel il-Konsolat Generali u f'dan il-każ tkellem direttament lili.

Minħabba n-numru ta' lockdowns li kellna fl-aħħar sena, n-numri ta' appuntamenti żdiedu sostanzjalment, u minħabba li ma' stajniex naqduhom, il-kju huwa twil. Pero' ottomist bħal dejjem li ser nipprovaw nagħmlu l-almu tagħna kollu sabiex nlestu kemm jista' jkun appuntamenti fl-iqsar żmien possibli. Tinsewx iġġibu magħkom il-maskra u jekk ma' tifilħux ikkanċellew l-appuntament, sabiex jekk ikollkom xi sintomi tal-COVID19 ma tifirxuhx mal-oħrajn, u sabiex niproteġu lill-istaff tal-Konsolat Generali.

Infakkrukomb sabiex iżżommu kuntatt kontinwu u għal aktar informazzjoni segwu l-paġna tal-Facebook, 'Consulate General of the Republic of Malta to Canada' jew ċemplu fuq 416-207-0922 / 416-207-0989.

Ħamsin sena mill-bidu ta' Dar l-Emigrant

Anniversarju signifikanti għall-Maltin u l-Għawdxin madwar id-dinja huwa n-nofs seklu mit-tqejjiet ta' l-ewwel ġebbla ta' Dar l-Emigrant, qrib Kastilja, il-Belt Valletta. Din il-binja tissimbolizza xhieda permanenti, konnessjoni u gieħ lill-emigrant Malti u Għawdxi. L-ewwel ġebbla tpoġġiet mill-Prim Ministru Dott Gorġ Borg Olivier u tberket mill-Arcisqof Mons Mikiel Gonzi.

Din id-dar hija dar ta' Malta Globali u bil-presenza ta' l-uniku Mużew dedikat lill-Istorja ta' Malta Globali u għalhekk huwa post għażiż u prezjuż għall-ġenerazzjonijiet preżenti u futuri ta' Maltin u Għawdxin madwar id-dinja u għal dawk kollha li għandhom l-emigrazzjoni parti mill-istorja tal-familthom. Jiena nemmen bis-sħiħ li Dar l-Emigrant hija d-dar tal-Maltin u l-Għawdxin kollha għaliex kulhadd kien xi darba jew oħra emigrant jekk tmur lura fl-istorja tal-familja, ilkoll konna emigranti.

Ix-xahar ta' Marzu huwa x-xahar ta' San Ġużepp u ta' Malta Fielsa

Marzu huwa normalment ix-xahar tal-kesħa sew f'Malta kif ukoll fil-Kanada. Din is-sena l-festa ta' San Ġużepp hija speċjali ħafna għaliex din is-sena timmarka l-150 sena minn meta l-Papa Pius IX ipproklama lil San Ġużepp il-patron universali tal-Knisja Kattolika. Hemm diversi lokalitajiet f'Malta u f'Għawdex fejn din il-festa tiġi ċcelebrata. Fil-Kanada, San Ġużepp huwa l-Patron tal-pajjiż. Ser

ent provinces and territories throughout Canada.

I must make this point very clear, everyone wanting a service from the Consulate must have an appointment. We cannot accept walk-ins. The only exceptions are when there is a case of an urgent nature and there is no other way around the case. In such cases, email us on maltaconsulate.toronto@gov.mt or call us on 416-207-0922 or 416-207-0989 to speak to me directly as to not to disrupt the daily packed appointment list.

Because of the number of lockdowns during the last year, the number of appointments have once again increased substantially, and since we could not attend to this long list, the time of waiting has increased. Despite all this please continue to book your appointments. The longer you leave not booking the longer before you will be attended to. Being an optimistic person, I am confident that we will do our utmost to get this challenge under control, keeping in mind that we are subject to restrictions owing to COVID-19. Do not forget your mask and, if you do not feel good on the day, reschedule your appointment to protect others and the staff of the Consulate General.

I remind you to continue to remain in contact with us by following our webpage, 'Consulate General of the Republic of Malta to Canada' or call us on 416-207-0922 / 416-207-0989.

50 years since the opening of 'Dar l-Emigrant'

A significant anniversary for all Maltese around the world marks the half century from the laying of the foundation stone of Dar l-Emigrant (Emigrant's House) at Castille Place in Valletta. This building symbolises a permanent witness, link and tribute to Maltese and Gozitan migrants. The stone was laid by Prime Minister Dr George Borg Oliver and blessed by Archbishop Mgr Mikiel Gonzi. (See pages 10-11 for more details.)

This building is the house of Global Malta and, with it being the only such museum dedicated to the story of the Maltese and Gozitan Diaspora, this place is so dear and precious to all present and future generations of Maltese and Gozitans around the world and all those who have a migrant heritage. I strongly believe that Emigrant's House is the house of all Maltese and Gozitans, since at some time in our family history we were all migrants.

March the month we celebrate St Joseph and Freedom Day in Malta

March is usually a cold month both in Malta and in Canada. This year the feast of St Joseph has a special meaning. Since it is the 150th year from

isiru diversi funzjonijiet speċjali sabiex ifakkru dan l-anniversarju.

Minbarra il-Festa ta' San Ġużepp li tradizz-jonaliment tiġi ċelebrat ir-Rabat, Malta u ix-Xagħra f'Għawdex insibu aktar festi. Fl-14 ta' Marzu jiġi ċelebrat San Valentinu f'Hal Balzan; San Pawl fid-19 ta' Marzu u Gesu' Nazzarenu f'Tas-Sliema fis-26 tax-xahar.

Din is-sena Malta tfakkar it-42 sena mill-Ħelsien, festa nazzjonali li tfakkarna meta l-kuntratt mal-Gvern Inġliż skada u għalhekk it-truppi Inġliżi stazzjonati Malta telqu. Hu pass ieħor fit-triq mill-Indipendenza sabiex Malta tkun pajjiż sovrann bħall-pajjiżi oħra.

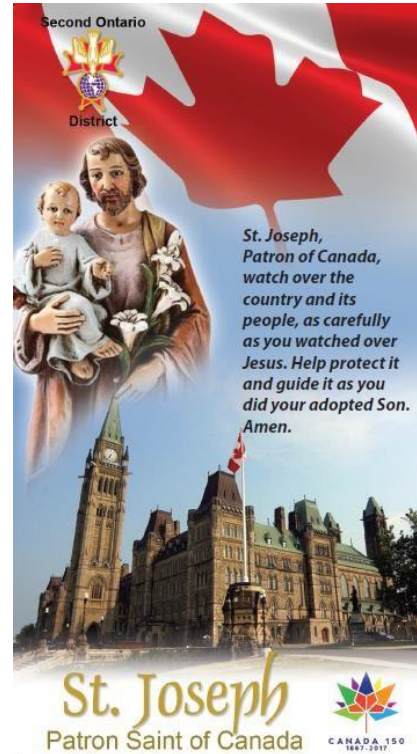


Freedom Monument, Birgu

Fl-aħħarnett, f'ismi, f'isem marti Marlene u familti nixtieq lil kull wieħed u waħda minnkom il-Festa ta' San Ġużepp mill-aqwa minkejja din il-gwerra tal-COVID19 u l-varjanti li għaddejjin minnha. Komplu ċemplu lil xulxin u araw l-anzjani tagħna għandhomx bżonn l-assistenza tagħkom sa fejn tistgħu...is-solitudni hija kerha hafna. Telefonata jew skype, zoom jew messenger tista' tagħmel id-differenza għal min jgħix waħdu.

O Mulej, bierak dejjem lil Malta u lill-Kanada!

when Pope Pius IX proclaimed St Joseph the universal patron saint of the Catholic Church. There are a number of localities in both Malta and Gozo that celebrate this feast. St Joseph is the patron saint of Canada and this would mean that special functions will be held throughout Canada to mark this anniversary.



Besides the feast of St Joseph that traditionally is celebrated in ir-Rabat in Malta and ix-Xagħra in Gozo there are more feasts. On March 14th the feast of St Valentine is celebrated at Hal Balzan; St Paul on the 19th and Jesus the Nazarene on March 26th in Tas-Sliema.

This year marks the 42nd anniversary of Freedom Day, a national occasion when we remember when the contract with the UK expired and all British troops left the Maltese Islands. Freedom Day marks another important step since Malta's independence leading towards a sovereign nation like all others around the globe.

Finally, on behalf of my wife Marlene and the family I would like to wish each and everyone of you a happy feast of St Joseph and stay safe as we combat COVID-19 and its variants. Continue to call each other to keep connected, especially with the elderly and those alone. This is what I have been doing while in quarantine besides other work.

O Lord, always bless Malta and Canada!

FIGOLLI: A MALTESE EASTER TRADITION

Lisa Buttigieg-LiGreci



Lisa's Maltese recipes have appeared regularly in this newsletter since July 2020. Her recipe for stuffed flank steak in soup (*falda mimlija fil-brodu*) appeared in the February issue.

As we enter the Lenten season, my thoughts turn to Easter preparations, particularly, making figolli. Plan ahead and give yourself enough time. It's an all-day project. I actually do it in two days: one day to make the cookies and almond paste then decorate them the next day. That being said, they are fun to make, especially if friends or family are helping. Children love creating their own figolli.

A figolla (singular) is a large cookie (or biscuit) filled with almond paste traditionally made during Holy Week to give as gifts to close family or friends to be eaten on Easter Sunday. In Malta, children carry their figolla in Easter processions to be blessed by their priest.

The earliest figolli have been traced back thousands of years, to the pagan fertility celebrations of the Phoenicians' worship of Astarte, the goddess of fertility and sexuality. In Malta, the Phoenicians converted the Tas-Silġ megalithic temple in Marsaxlokk into Astarte's sanctuary. According to mythology, symbols of fertility, or figures of men and women were presented to Astarte. This very well could have been the beginnings for what is now figolli.

The word figolla is derived from the Sicilian word *figulina* meaning figure. The earliest figolli shapes were figures of a man or woman. Today a paper cut out depicting a head adorned in an old costume is used to stick on the icing.

As Christianity spread, figolli were used to convert the population away from paganism. Different shapes were used as symbols, e.g. a fish was used as a symbol of Jesus Christ, while a basket was a symbol of fertility. Other shapes such as a lamb or cross were also Christian symbols. The cookies were decorated with eggs colored with dye made from onion skin, fruits and vegetables as a sign of fertility. They were baked for religious purposes and also to celebrate and remember victories against invaders such as the Turks who were also made to be figures. The *figulina* baked in ancient Sicily, are

not as popular in today's Sicily, but have stayed and evolved in Malta.

At the dawn of the 20th century, figolli gained its popularity in Malta by adding icing (*ġelu*) or a chocolate coating. This is also when the almond (*intrita*) filling first appeared. Remember, sugar was a very expensive commodity before then.



Found on the Internet

Nowadays, shapes symbolizing Spring, such as butterflies, rabbits, hearts, and doves, and even the Maltese Cross, are very popular. Figolli can be shaped into anything the person you give one to is passionate about. I make Star Wars figolli for my grandsons.



Large aluminum figolli cutters are used to make the shapes which can range between 6-12 inches. You can create a cardboard shape and use it as a stencil on the dough. Just carve around the perimeter of the shape using a sharp knife. I also used pancake forms to make my Star Wars figolli.



Once baked, the cookies are frosted with colorful icing or coated with melted chocolate and decorated with fancy piping techniques or colored candies. FYI, it wouldn't be a figolla without a chocolate egg wrapped in foil placed on the top, keeping with the tradition of decorating with eggs. Hint, I cut mine in half so they stay on better. You can also serve them "naked" but, what's the fun in that?

While traditions have changed, the popularity of the Maltese figolla remains. They are a staple for many Maltese families at Easter. Why not try your hand at making them this year?

INGREDIENTS:

NOTE: I am providing a recipe for both royal icing and for glaze. You choose which one you want to use.

FOR THE DOUGH:

- 3½ cups all-purpose flour

- ¼ cup butter or margarine (1½ sticks)
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 3 Tbs. baking powder
- ½ tsp. table salt
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- ¾ cup milk
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract



FOR THE ALMOND PASTE:

- 3½ cups roasted ground almonds, unsalted
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 Tbs. orange zest
- 1 oz. almond extract
- 1 Tbs. orange blossom water (optional)

NOTE: Orange blossom water can be found in most Middle Eastern markets.



FOR THE ROYAL ICING:

- 4 cups confectioners' sugar
 - 2 large egg whites
- NOTE: If you don't want to use raw eggs, substitute with 3 Tbs. meringue powder (*not plain egg white powder*)
- juice of ½ lemon
 - warm water (if needed)
 - food coloring (your choice of colors)

COOK'S TIP: When making a recipe that calls for only egg yolks, freeze the whites in ice cube trays and store them in freezer bags for future use.



FOR THE GLAZE:

- 4 cups confectioners' sugar
- warm water

INSTRUCTIONS:

FOR THE DOUGH:

1. Measure out all your ingredients.
2. Cut the butter into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch pieces.
3. Sift together all the dry ingredients into a stand mixer's mixing bowl.
4. Using the whisk attachment, mix the dry ingredients on the lowest setting until combined.
5. Add the butter, and mix to a crumbly consistency. The whisk attachment works like a pastry cutter.



6. Switch to the beater attachment or a dough hook. Add all the wet ingredients and mix until thoroughly combined.



NOTE: If you don't have a stand mixer, mix the dough by hand simply by combining all the dry ingredients first, then adding the butter. Once all the butter is coated and has a crumbly consistency, incorporate the wet ingredients.

7. Form the dough into a ball, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

FOR THE ALMOND PASTE:

1. While the dough is chilling, prep and measure your filling ingredients.
2. You can buy almond paste, but it's pricey. It's much more economical to make your own. Some people are purists and buy blanched and peeled almonds to make theirs. I choose a more rustic approach and use the nuts with the skin on. It's your choice. Just grind the nuts in a blender 1 cup at a time until you get the amount needed to make $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups. Be sure not to grind too long or you will wind up with almond butter. It should have a consistency like sand.
3. Make a simple syrup by mixing the sugar and water in a small saucepan and almost bring it to a boil on medium heat stirring often to dissolve the sugar. When you see tiny bubbles form, you are done.



4. Remove from heat and mix in the almond extract, and orange blossom water.
5. Start mixing in the ground almonds. The filling will thicken as it cools. If the filling is too loose, add extra ground almonds. It should have the consistency and look of very thick oatmeal.

NOTE: If you know someone with nut allergies, you can substitute with fruit preserves. Just don't fill them on the same day to avoid cross contamination.



FOR THE ROYAL ICING:

1. Combine the egg whites and lemon juice in the bowl of a stand mixer and beat until frothy.
2. Add confectioners' sugar gradually and mix on low speed until sugar is incorporated and the mixture is shiny.
3. Turn speed up to high and beat until mixture forms stiff, glossy peaks, approximately 5 to 7 minutes.
4. If the mix is too stiff add some warm water 1 tsp. at a time.
5. Divide the icing into small bowls and stir in the selected colors of food coloring in each bowl.
6. Use immediately.

FOR THE GLAZE:

1. Mix together the sugar, and just enough of the water to make a very thick but spreadable consistency.
2. Divide the glaze into small bowls and add the selected colors of food coloring in each bowl.
3. Use immediately.

ASSEMBLY:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Retrieve your dough from the refrigerator and divide into 4 equal pieces. Work with one piece at a time, keeping the remaining dough in the fridge while you work.
3. Roll the dough to about ¼ inch thickness between 2 pieces of parchment paper. The dough is sticky so you may want to flour the paper.
4. Peel off the top piece of parchment.
5. Cut the dough with the figolli cutter or your choice of template.



6. Remove the excess dough around the form and return it to the rest of the dough.



7. Repeat steps 3-6 on separate sheets of parchment to make an identical form.
8. Line a cookie sheet with a clean piece of parchment paper and spray it with vegetable spray.
9. Carefully flip the cut dough onto the lined cookie sheet and peel the parchment paper off. The dough is sticky so be careful not to stretch or tear the form.
10. Filling the figolli is a sticky job. Keep a small bowl of water nearby. Dollop a teaspoon of almond paste at a time onto the bottom form. Wet your fingers and spread the almond paste leaving ¼ inch around the edges.



11. Peel the parchment off the 2nd form and place it directly on top of the 1st form with the almond paste.
12. Lightly press down around the edges to seal the pastry together and prevent the almond paste from leaking out.



MISS MALTA PAGEANT

Richard S. Cumbo

13. Continue the process until all the dough is used up. This recipe should yield approximately 5 to 6 figolli depending on the size of your cutters.
14. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until the figolli is golden brown.
15. Let them cool on the cookie sheet to harden. They are too soft to move coming out of the oven and will break.
16. Once cooled, place on a wire rack to decorate. Be sure they have cooled completely before decorating.



17. While the figolli are cooling, make your icing or glaze.
18. Decorate the figolli either by spreading the icing on, or coat it with melted chocolate. You can embellish your figolli with a piping bag, using different tips. Colored candies like dragees, M&Ms, jelly beans, sprinkles or even Jordan Almonds are also a great addition and don't forget your foil wrapped chocolate eggs!



You don't have to be a professional chef to make figolli. As you can see, I certainly am not. Just be creative and have fun! Here are some of my creations.



In 1966 Canada was planning various national celebrations to commemorate its Centennial Year in 1967. A historic event for the Toronto Maltese community also took place in 1966. Knight of Malta Frank Savona, president of the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto (M.C.S.T.) received permission from Toronto City Council to officially raise the Maltese Flag for the first time at Toronto New City Hall. This took place on Malta National Day, September 8, 1966.

Being a proud Maltese-Canadian President Savona, after meeting with his committee, decided that the M.C.S.T. should organize an event to celebrate the 100th birthday of Canada. In order to make it a community event he organized a Centennial Committee comprised of all the Maltese organizations which existed at that time.

Frank and the Centennial Committee agreed that the community could organize a Miss Malta of Toronto contest, as well as the making of a centennial float. Such a float was designed and constructed by Mr. Joe Zammit.

The first Miss Malta of Toronto contest took place in early 1967, with the winner being Joyce Micallef. The contest was so popular and successful that the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto president and committee decided to include it as an annual event in its yearly activities. This was the birth of the future Miss Malta of Canada Pageant, which was held from 1967 until 2007. I was personally involved with the pageant from 1971 to 2003. I then left the M.C.S.T. for awhile. Planning for this activity took many months of preparation and the M.C.S.T. decided that it would be better if the contest were held near the end of each year. In this way the winner of the pageant could commence her reign at the beginning of the following year.

Administratively, a great amount of work was necessary in devising a Miss Malta guide lines application form, forms to be used by the three judges (judges were never Maltese), questions to be used during the pageant by the judges and the overall criteria and stages of the pageant. Only one person from the M.C.S.T. committee was designated to choose the three judges and the names of the judges were never released until the day of the event.

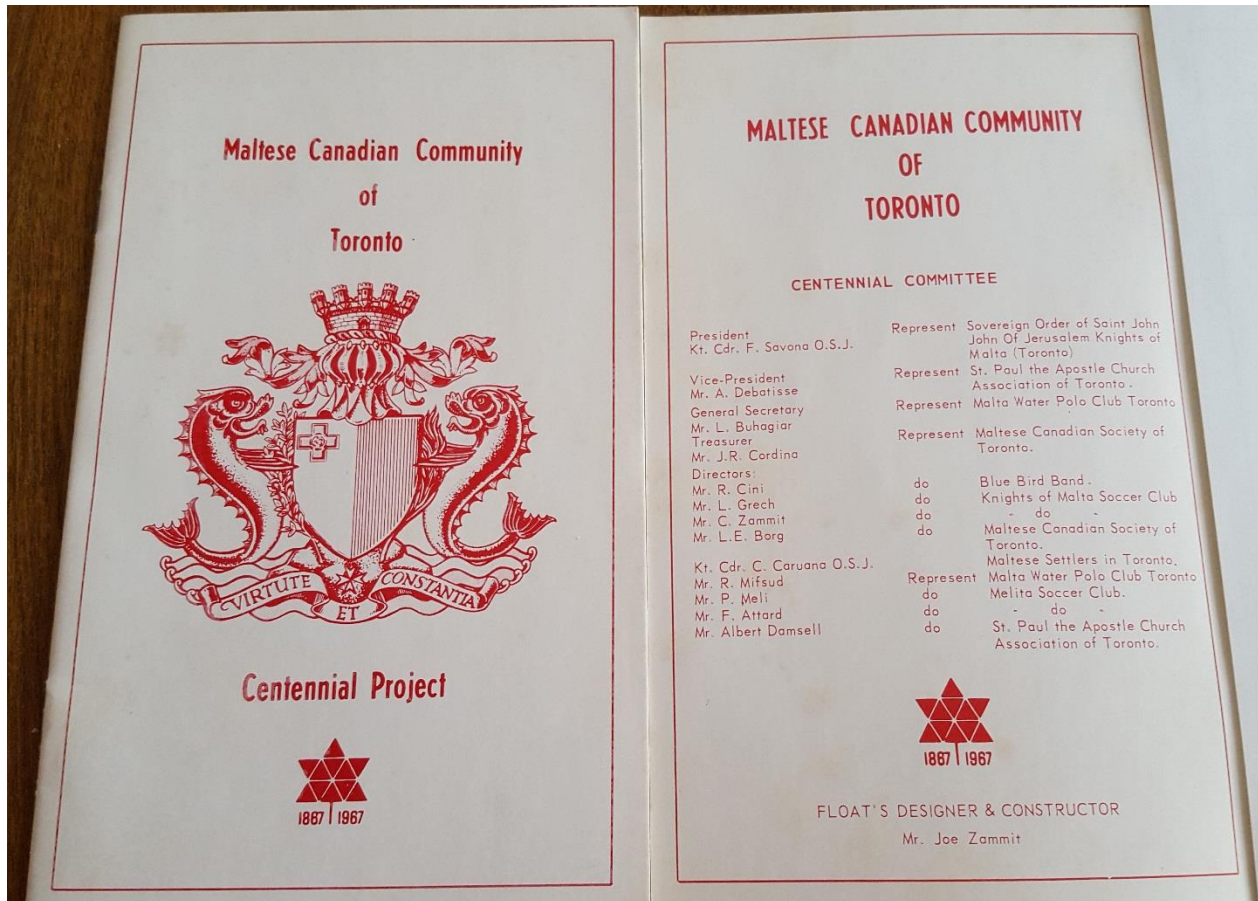
Contestants had to be between the ages of 16 and 23 years and single. During the many rehearsals prior to the event, the contestants were told that the judging aspect was not on beauty alone.

Personality and poise were the more important factors. Each contestant was interviewed by the judges prior to the pageant.

The pageant was divided into three stages: Sunday dress, swim suit and evening gown. During her appearance on the runway, each girl would be

asked a question by the master of ceremony.

Members of the Society committee had to find a venue, hire a caterer, a band, sponsors for various gifts and solicit advertisements for the Miss Malta booklet.



Funds from the booklet helped to defray some of the many expenses. The pageants rarely financially came out ahead; they normally broke even.

In the early years the main photographer was Charles Cassar, later and for many years, the official Miss Malta photographer was Joe Camilleri.* The event was often taped by Alfred Fenech and Sam Cassar.

Within a few years the Miss Malta of Canada Pageant became the highlight of the year in the Maltese community. It also indirectly became a unifying factor. Since most of the contestants' parents belonged to the various clubs, the clubs began to better interact and support each other, especially this event. Soon different clubs began to

ask for the presence of the M.C.S.T. Miss Malta to their own events.

The Miss Malta cape had been donated by Chev. Nicholas Pulis* in 1967. The annual Miss Malta Trophy (engraved with the names of the winners) belonging to the Society was donated by Joseph Vassallo (his father had been one of the M.C.S.T. founders in 1922). At the 1991 Pageant, Pat Parnis presented the Society with a beautiful "Miss Malta" statuette. Jeweller Felix Grech designed a new gold-plated Miss Malta crown about the same point in time. Sadly, the Vassallo trophy, Parnis ceramic statuette and throne have gone missing. The rest of the Miss Malta attire are on exhibit at the Maltese-Canadian Museum/Archives in Toronto.



Display at the Maltese-Canadian Museum/Archives, 2019

Photo by Mani Mifsud

**The Trophy and Statuette.
Where Are They Now?**



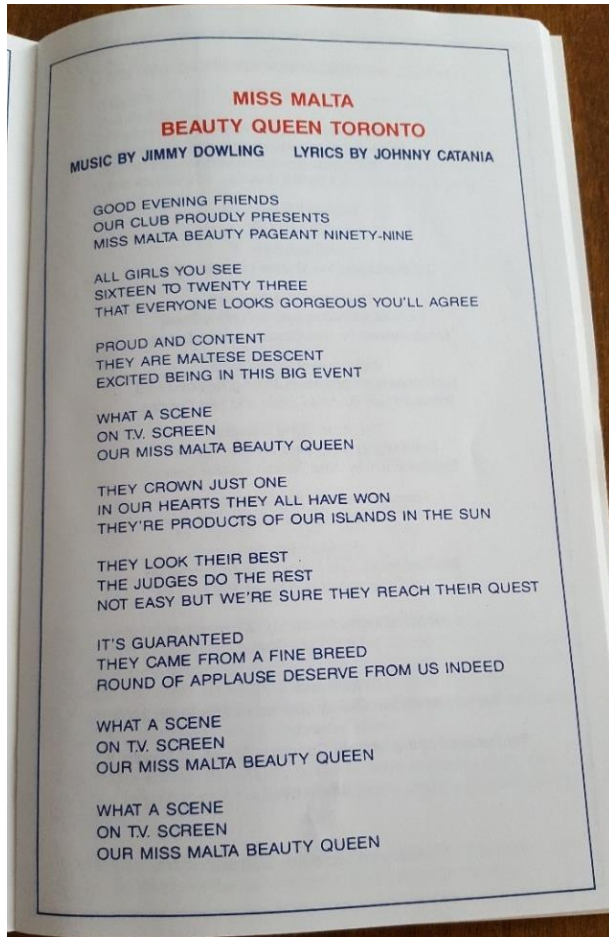
Each contestant in this event received a trophy donated by Ron Parnis. The three runners-up and the winner received gifts and special trophies that they could keep. The main prize was always a return ticket to Malta courtesy of Melita Travel Service.

The pageant had become so popular that James Dowling wrote the music and Johnny Catania the words for a Miss Malta song. Comedian Johnny Catania often entertained the guests at the event.

During the four decades many volunteered to be the master of ceremony, amongst these were: Tony Parnis, Joseph Bugelli, Enzo Gusman, Valerie Borg

and Melissa Haber. The one who served the longest, however, was Gina Hili, often assisted by Johnny Catania. Mrs. Hili, prior to every pageant, spent many hours with the contestants in rehearsals on the M.C.S.T. premises. She was always very popular with the contestants.

Every pageant was held under the distinguished patronage of a government minister, politician or well-known personality. In later years, however, it became popular to have the Consul General of Malta to Canada and his wife as the patrons.



During the dinner dance which followed the pageant the M.C.S.T. president would thank all who had been involved and that although one was picked as the new Miss Malta of Canada, all the contestants were deemed winners just by entering. The president then opened the dance floor by having the first dance with the new Miss Malta of Canada.



**Miss Malta 1988, Lillian Camilleri
with Ron Parnis, Donor of the Ceramic Statue
Representing "Miss Malta"**



**Gina Hill and Johnny Catania
Miss Malta Pageant 1988**

Photo by Madlene Cumbo

The M.C.S.T. pageant had become so popular and received so much media coverage here and in Malta, that the Miss Malta (of Malta) group contacted the Society telling them that they could not use the name Miss Malta. The response from the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto was that the Society had been using the name before the group in Malta. Acting in good faith, however, the M.C.S.T. agreed to add "of Canada" to the title.

As far as I know the final pageant took place on November 11, 2006. Christina Petroni was happily crowned Miss Malta of Canada-2007 on this the 40th anniversary of the pageant. The 2006 committee of the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto of that time, which numbered four individuals, according to the booklet, hired professionals to assist with the pageant. This 2006 pageant was a Maltese-Cana-

dian Society of Toronto and Malta Band Club joint event.

MALTESE-CANADIAN SOCIETY OF TORONTO.
EST. 1922
WINNERS OF THE MISS MALTA OF CANADA
TITLE

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>YEAR</u> |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Joyce Micallef | 1967 |
| Margaret Tonna | 1968 |
| Miriam Camilleri | 1969 |
| Monica Scannura | 1970 |
| Donna Rossi | 1971 |
| Jane Simiana | 1972 |
| Diane Spiteri | 1973 |
| Caron Galea | 1974 |
| Cini Aquilina | 1975/76 |
| Rose Bonello | 1977 |
| Janet Butters | 1978 |
| Josette Bonello | 1979 |
| Jacqueline Borg | 1980 |
| Mary Bartolo | 1981 |
| Antwanette Zammit | 1982 |
| Marthese Pace | 1983 |
| Evelyn Cordes | 1984 |
| Michelle Muscat | 1985 |
| Gina Spiteri | 1986 |
| Connie Capicotto | 1987 |
| Lilian Camilleri | 1988 |
| Diane Haber | 1989 |
| Denise Neville | 1990 |
| Genevieve Abela | 1991 |
| Caroline MacKenzie | 1992 |
| Katherine Aquilina | 1993 |
| Lucienne Haber | 1994 |
| Marsha Tanti | 1995 |
| Shannon Mifsud | 1996 |
| Natalie Camilleri | 1997 |
| Melissa Haber | 1998 |
| Shannon Wilson | 1999 |
| Natalie Stewart | 2000 |
| Cindra Borg | 2001/02 |
| Anita Grima | 2003 |
| Holly Buttigieg | 2006 |
| Christina Petroni | 2007 |

In addition to the three Haber sisters—Diane, Lucienne and Melissa—being chosen as Miss Malta for the years 1989, 1994 and 1998 respectively, a fourth, Tania, was first runner-up in 1992. Carolyn McKenzie, who won the title in 1992, is a popular talk show host on Global TV. Another Miss Malta became a nun with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.

Among the positive outcomes of the pageants were the girls gaining even more confidence in themselves, becoming more extroverted and forming life-long friendships, having shared in an activity which would become something that they would always remember with fondness. Through the pageants some met their future spouses. Some went on to enter other pageants.



**Denise Neville, Miss Malta 1990
with Her Mother, Margaret (Tonna) Neville,
Who Was Crowned Miss Malta in 1968**



**Miss Malta 2003, Anna Grima,
with First, Second and Third Runners-
Up, Shondra Zahra, Mary Dalli and
Sherryann Rigby**

Photo by Joe Zammit



Miss Malta 2006, Holly Buttigieg with M.C.S.T Ross "Zorro" Zammit
Ross' Sister, Antwanette Zammit was Miss Malta 1982



The M.C.S.T. Committee with Miss Malta 1991, 16-Year-Old Genevieve Abela,
and First Runner-up Trinette Mallia, Second Lisa Vella and Third Diane Aquilina.

Photo by Joe Zammit



Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto Inc.

Proudly Presents



Under the Distinguished Patronage of
Consul General of Malta
Mr. Edwin Abela



Miss Malta 2007 Contestants



The Writer Standing in Front of the Miss Malta Wall of Fame – 1990

Photo by Madlene Cumbo

In my account in the February issue of those connected with Maltese programs on cable television in Toronto, I inadvertently omitted the name of John Vella, who alongside his sister, Valerie Borg, “contributed two years to the Lehen Malti Program and did so with a great deal of interest and enthusiasm.”

I would like to publically thank Carmen Galea, John Vella and Holly (Buttigieg) Roberts, Miss Malta of 2006, in particular, for the information they provided in the preparation of this writeup.

**Editor's Note: An account of Joe Camilleri appeared in the February 2021 issue. Nicholas Pulis was commemorated in the November 2019 issue.*

ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE MALTESE COMMUNITIES

Dan Brock

The Greater Toronto Area, Ontario
Consulate General of Malta to Canada
 Consul General Dr. Raymond Xerri returned to Canada from Malta on Monday, February 22nd.



With the partial lifting of restrictions during this pandemic, the Consulate General will reopen on Monday, March 8th

Lehen Malti

LEHEN MALTI (Maltese Voice)

OMNI 1 - Ontario
Saturdays 8:30 a.m.
Tuesdays 3.30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.
Wednesdays 11:00 p.m.
Thursdays 8:30 a.m.

OMNI BC
Saturdays 2:00 p.m.
Fridays 10:30 a.m.

OMNI Alberta
Saturdays 2:00 p.m.
Wednesdays 7:00 p.m.

Malta Band Club

Traditional Maltese foods were available as a fundraiser. In addition to timpani, għaġin il-forn and ross il-forn, there were frozen pastizzi and qassatat.

These were available for pickup at the Club between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on Saturday February 6th and 13th.

St. Paul the Apostle Parish

Fr. Frank Portelli, a former parishioner was appointed rector of St. Michael's Basilica. His duties commenced on February 1st. The third of seven children, he was ordained on May 9, 2009.

Eight services were held for the distribution of ashes with communion: three on **Ash Wednesday**, February 17th and two each on the 18th and 19th.

Metropolitan Detroit

Maltese American Community Club of Dearborn

The Club has figolli cutters available for sale, Easter being the traditional time for making and eating figolli.

New York City

Maltese Center: Astoria

On Sunday, February 7th, between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. EST, the Center presented its live ZOOM show *Il-Maltin Tagħna* with New York-based street photographer Nicolette "Nicky" Conti.

The Center reopened on Friday, February 19th in the Upper Hall. The backyard and bocce court were also accessible from the Upper Hall. The usual requirements during this pandemic were to be observed.

Windsor

Malta United Society of Windsor, Ontario

As of Saturday, February 20th the Society once again opened its doors to members and guests from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. A limit of only 10 people were allowed indoors but takeout and curbside were also available.

Inside, masks covering the nose and mouth were to be worn at all times, except when eating and drinking. Hands needed to be sanitized upon entering and the registry signed. A maximum of four persons per household were permitted to sit at the same table. All other were to be spaced 2 m apart from each other. Alcohol could be served until 9:00 p.m. The Club had to close by 10:00 p.m.

Servers needed to wear safety goggles or a face shield, in addition to a mask, when required to come within 2 m of patrons to serve food/drink.

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
desertdancer007@yahoo.ca

Knights of Columbus - Canada – Council # 12782

c/o St Patrick's Church, 921 Flagship Drive,
Mississauga, ON, N4Y 2J6
905-270-2301 (Church)
stpatricksmi@archtoronto.org
Grand Knight Amadeo Cuschieri

Legion of Mary – “Our Lady of the Migrant”

c/o St. Paul The Apostle Parish
3224 Dundas St. W., Toronto M6P 2A3
Tel: 416-767-7054
www.saint-paul-Maltese.com
stpaulmssp@gmail.com
President: Mary Vella

Lehen Malti

<https://www.omnitv.ca › shows › lehen-malti>
c/o 2387 Chilworthy Avenue., Mississauga, ON
L5B 2R4
Contact Person: Joe Sherri
416-571-3944
email lehenmalti@hotmail.com

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.

Malta Village Association (Est. 1995)

c/o 3256 Dundas Street West, Toronto M6P 2A3
Tel: 416-769-2174
Fax: 416-769-2174
maltabakeshopltd@gmail.com
att: Antonia Buttigieg

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 (MCACH)

c/o 381 Fairview Drive, Brantford ON N3R 2X7
mcach1964@gmail.com

Maltese Canadian Association (Gozo)

c/o Trillium, Sqaq Nru 1, Triq it-Tigrija, ix-Xagħra
Tel: 011 356 21560656

mcagozo@hotmail.com

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 Chilsworth Avenue, Mississauga, ON
L5B 2R4

416-571-3944

joeshherri@rogers.com

Maltese Canadian Federation, The (Toronto)

c/o 2387 Chilsworth 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@isqtransport.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

mmpastizzi@gmail.com

Maltese Heritage Association San Francisco Bay Area

maltesheritageassociation@gmail.com

Maltese Heritage Program (Toronto)

c/o 59A Terry Drive, Toronto, ON, M6N 4Y8

Coordinator: Carmen Galea

416-766-5830

gormija@sympatico.ca

Maltese Historical Society (San Francisco)

c/o_leprofess@aol.com

Melita Soccer Club Inc.

3336 Dundas St. W., Toronto, ON M6P 2A4

416-763-5317

msc@melitasoccerclub.com

St. Paul the Apostle Parish

3224 Dundas St. W. Toronto, ON M6P 2A3

416-767-7054

www.saint-paul-maltese.com

stpaulmssp@gmail.com

St. Paul the Apostle Parish Mission Group

c/o 281 Gilmour Ave., Toronto, ON M6P 3B6

416-708-8627

www.facebook.com/john.vella.1044186

giovanvel@sympatico.ca

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

St. Paul's Maltese Choir

c/o St Paul The Apostle Parish

3224 Dundas St. W., Toronto M6P 2A3

416-767-7054

www.saint-paul-maltese.com

stpaulmssp@gmail.com

President: Lino Debono

FOUR MALTESE PRIESTS ACTIVE IN NORTH AMERICA IN THE 1920s



Fr. George Joseph Caruana
Fr. Lawrence E. Attard, *Beyond Our Shores*, p. 120



Fr. Michael Borg
Fr. Lawrence E. Attard, *The Great Exodus*, p. 43



Padre James Baldacchino
Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta



Rev. Spiridione M. Grech
Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta

(See pages 5-6, 8)