

# THE MALTESE PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA



**E-NEWSLETTER**

Issue 4

JULY 2019



**THE HERMANN-GRIMA HOUSE, ST. LOUIS STREET, NEW ORLEANS, JULY 2009**

(Photo courtesy of Frank Mifsud, London, ON)

(See story, pages 9-10)

## EDITORIAL COMMENT



**Dan Brock**

With this fourth issue, the journal has been changed from a bi-monthly to a monthly. Consequently, the number of pages of each issue is to be reduced as well. This has been suggested by three of the readers/-contributors. (see Opinion, page 4)

The length of some of the articles and the number of “historical” articles is of concern of some individuals as well. I promise I will bear these constructive suggestions in mind but there is no guarantee that these will be followed religiously.

Remember, this journal was established to showcase the Maltese presence in North America, both now and in the past. As an historian and a student of the Maltese Diaspora in North America it would be very difficult for me to overlook the Maltese contribution on this continent in years past.

As for some articles being extra long, I believe that in some cases this cannot be avoided, given the timeliness of certain articles. That related to *Sette Giugno* in the last issue was, I believe, a case in point and I make no apologies for the length of this very relevant piece and the new light it had to shed on that tragic event exactly 100 years ago and its North American connection.

In reading *The Times of Malta*, especially *The Sunday Times*, one encounters articles of a similar length and depth.

Moreover, I for one, rarely read a newspaper in its entirety or even a very relevant journal to which I subscribe. I don't expect you to be any different, but I do anticipate that

there is something of relevance in every issue to each and every one of you.

Having said all this, please don't feel you have to mute or curb your suggestions as to how to improve this journal. They are enthusiastically welcomed and seriously contemplated as I do want this to be **YOUR** journal.

On the other hand, as noted in the editorial of the second issue, in the words of the late Maltese benefactor, Joseph Edward Doublet: “No matter how perfect a newspaper or review can be, it could never please all readers or potential subscribers of any community.”

In addition to the segment on activities within the Maltese communities throughout North America (pages 3-4), this issue has a piece on a Maltese-American bishop who in May became the first graduate of a Redemptoris Mater seminary to be appointed head of a diocese on the mainland of the United States. (page 11) and the recent death of the longest-living male of the Maltese Diaspora. (pages 6-7)

Page 8 features an article on one of the very active Maltese clubs in North America. This overview of the Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco is both historical and current. It was begun by the late Abraham Vella, who died in 1999. His daughter, Mona Vella-Nicholas, continues to keep this up to date on the Club's website. The last page (page 12) of the issue, contains the logos of many of the Maltese associations in North America, both now and in the past.

An article of a purely historical nature in this issue is that of the Grima family of New Orleans with origins dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (pages 9-10)

One of the aims of this journal is to assist those interested in discovering more about their Maltese roots. To this end, you are directed to Mark Caruana's write-up on Charles Said-Vassallo and free access to his massive online undertaking [maltagenealogy.com](http://maltagenealogy.com). (pages 5-6). A special thanks goes

to Mark for taking to time to write this article and to Charles for his cooperation in this.

Thanks also goes to Mona Vella-Nicholas, not only for permitting the reprinting, with updates, of her and her late father's article, but also for her very astute proofreading talents. Again, my thanks goes to Albert Vella of Scarborough, ON for his ongoing efforts in providing a table of contents for this journal.

Again, you are encouraged to share this journal with others to whom it might be of interest.

I also encourage various Maltese organizations and associations to use this newsletter to promote themselves and their activities.

Again, you are invited and encouraged to use this venue to share accounts of the Maltese in North America. This could be of the Maltese in your community, the history of your local Maltese club/association, the arrival of your family to North America, etc. in addition to recent or upcoming events in your community.

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## GLEANINGS FROM THE SUNDAY BULLETIN

### PASTOR'S THOUGHTS...



*Fr. Mario Micallef, M.S.S.P., 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.*

#### **Do You Love Me?**

"Do you love me?". This is the question we are invited to ponder on during these coming days. The question is not whether I have been good, or whether I have made mistakes. Do I sincerely love Him? The rest will follow.

#### **Our Faith Is a Relationship of Love**

Our faith is not a religion of duties and obligations. It is a relationship of love. Like any other loving relationship, it can only grow with time, with presence, with listening to what is both spoken and unspoken. A good question to ask myself during my prayer time

#### **We Are Not Alone**

We are not alone. As Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure, He wanted to make sure that they understood the fact that they would never be abandoned. Christ's departure only implied a new way of have Good at their side. Indeed, what seemed to be the evening of Jesus' life became dawn.

#### **Jesus' Mission Is Still a Work in Progress**

Jesus goes up to Heaven, where He had come from. In a way, His mission is accomplished. He has done what He had come to do. And yet, simultaneously, the mission of Jesus goes on. It is still a work in progress. The only difference is that it is, now up to us to continue what He had started....a number of questions and doubts may come to mind. Am I worthy? Probably not. Have I got what it takes? On my own, definitely not! But...what makes it possible in my case is not simply the inspiration coming from what the Master has already done. It is, rather, a power coming from the Master Himself. He has promised to give the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit He had.

### **The Gift of the Holy Spirit**

Unfortunately, we often tend to forget the beauty of this gift which we have received in our baptism. Jesus knows that, on our own, we cannot do much good. He knows our weaknesses, our limitations, our brokenness. That is why He gave so much importance to this gift when He spoke to his disciples about it. We too are often painfully aware of what holds us back from doing good, or from doing what we know we should be doing. It is precisely in those moments when we need to remember what power we have received. All we have to do is to humbly ask for help. We won't be disappointed.

#### **Created in God's Image**

Being created in God's likeness, we are all equally important and distinct personalities. We are different to each other, not better than any other. And yet, we are not created for loneliness. We need each other. We are made for relationships, for communion.

**Fr. Mario Micallef, M.S.S.P.**  
**St. Paul the Apostle Church,**  
**3224 Dundas St. W. Toronto, ON M6P 2A3**  
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### **ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE MALTESE COMMUNITIES**

#### **Dan Brock**

#### **The Bay Area, California**

On May 19<sup>th</sup> the Maltese Historical Society sponsored a free luncheon for seniors in the Maltese community who, for reasons of health or age, do not get out much anymore. Each senior was able to bring a guest/driver to share in the free lunch. Thanks to the Maltese-American Social Club for offering financial assistance as well as their premises to serve as the venue for this event.

#### **The Greater Toronto Area, Ontario**

At St. Paul the Apostle Church, at the 10:30 a.m. Mass, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, a special celebration was held to thank God for the gift of St. George Preca, whose feast day is May 9<sup>th</sup>. Our Lady Mother of the Immigrant was celebrated during the 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. A Seniors' Summer Luncheon was held on Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>. The St. Paul Youth Group hosted a Breakfast Sunday after all Sunday Masses on June 2<sup>th</sup>.

Festa Gorgjana, hosted by the Malta Band Club, Mississauga, was held on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>.

A farewell for Ms. Hanan El Khatib, Consul General of Malta in Canada for the past three years, was held. Following the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Paul's Church, on

Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, a reception was held in the parish hall.

The Imnarja Festival, organized by the Maltese Canadian Federation, was held at Runnymede Park, Toronto, on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Maltese Canadian Cruisers "Show & Shine" was held at The Malta Band Club, Mississauga, between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>. This consisted of a display of classic cars and trucks, special vehicles, classic and modern muscle cars and modified or custom vehicles and bikes.

The month of July will see St. Paul the Apostle Parish receiving an associate pastor in the person of Fr. Ivano Burdian, MSSP.

### London, Ontario

One of the few remaining post-World War II "pioneers" to Canada in May-June 1948, died on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Laurence Dominic "Larry" Mizzi was 93 years old.

Emmanuel Vincent Schembri, perhaps the longest-living male of the Maltese Diaspora, died on June 19<sup>th</sup>, at the age of 104 years, nine months and zero days.

The monthly luncheons of those within the Maltese Canadian community in the London area were held at Mykono's Restaurant on Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> and at Bertoldi's Trattoria on Tuesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>.

A Maltese Summer Picnic is planned for the afternoon of Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, at Weldon Park in Arva.

### Malta United Society of Windsor, Ontario

Charmel "Charlie" Tabone, died on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the age of 71.

Imnarja was celebrated on the evening of June 29<sup>th</sup> with the Society's traditional rabbit dinner.

The annual Maltese Family Picnic will be held at Lacasse Park on Sunday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Maltese Center NYC

The Maltese Center Dolphins Melita Pig Roast / BBQ was held on Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at the Maltese Center.

On Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup> the Dolphins played the Maltese Canucks of Toronto, ON, at the Grover Cleveland Athletic Field, Ridgewood, NY for the annual North America Maltese Community Soccer Cup. The Canucks won 4-1.

Eddie Debono, President of the Maltese Center, chatted in Maltese on a street in New York City with Pete Buttigieg, on Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Debono then invited the Democratic presidential candidate speak at the Center and to join him in having pastizzi at one of the restaurants in Astoria.

## READER COMMENTS

...please don't take offense, but the journal seems a bit long, given the attention span of the average individual, especially for online reading. I realize that

you have a lot of current news articles to share, which I

am sure the entities involved will be happy to see covered in the journal, but perhaps you might consider limiting the historical articles to one per issue, thus spreading them out over several issues. It would be a shame to have readers skip over these articles due to time constraints on their part. Alternatively, you might consider making this a monthly journal of half the length. You have obviously spent hours and hours of your time creating this journal, so I don't think it would take any more of your time to simply send out half the number of pages each month. You know how much I admire your work and would love to see your readership increase exponentially; this may be one way of doing that.

Mona Vella Nicholas, San Francisco, CA

I tend to agree that a shorter-paged journal, issued monthly, is a good idea as it will generate more momentum and make community announcements not past their due date. I believe the frequency is more important than the number of pages. This is only my view....I do not agree...to diminish historical articles. Migration to Canada has stopped for these last 35 years and now the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are becoming interested in their heritage. Needless to say, I am biased towards recording settlement migration but I believe that I am right and so would you be right too.

Mark Caruana, Sydney, Australia

....I want to say, well done, "*prosit*" and its very informative. Keep it going.

The reason why I am writing is because I like to make a couple of small suggestions.

(1) In my opinion, all the articles are very long, and I suspect that some people might not read certain items because of that.

(2) [Also] start to publish the newsletter on a monthly basis instead of bi-monthly.

Bottom line, shorter articles, but more frequent.

Lots of very interesting info. Thanks again, and keep up the good work...

Carmen Galea, Toronto, ON

Well done, Dan, for a lovely and informative newsletter. Keep it up and thank you.

Paul Vella, Reskeon Maltese Association and Radio 3ZZZ, Melbourne, Australia

Dan thank you for all the stories you are finding.

Vinnie Cristina, Toronto, ON

Keep up the good work!!!!!!

Claudia Caruana, New York, NY

**CHARLES SAID-VASSALLO:  
A RESEARCHER WHO SPECIALISES IN THE  
FAMILY HISTORY OF THE MALTESE PEOPLE\***

**Mark Caruana**

*Editor's note: Mention of Charles Said-Vassallo and his website [maltagenealogy.com](http://maltagenealogy.com) has been made in each of the three previous issues. Mark is a regular contributor to this journal.*

Charles was born in 1971, in Sydney, Australia to an Mgarr-born father and second-generation Maltese mother. Like so many others, both families arrived to a new country for better opportunities as life in Malta was limited.

His father is directly descended from a family who are senior descendants of the Prince Djem of the Ottoman Empire, who died, in 1495, in Naples, shortly after being released from the custody of Pope Alexander VI Borgia.

His descendants ventured into Naples, then Sicily and later into Malta. With the Grand Master grant of land in Santi (limits of Mgarr Malta) as a tenant, they served till the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their pretension was acknowledged till his ancestor's execution in 1799 along with many others who tried to defeat the French.

Charles' maternal grandfather was of the landed gentry in the northwest of Malta, who were quite prominent over the centuries. Later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the family became claimant to an ancient feudal Vassallo title in Sicily, which is still used till this day.

Another ancestor was descended, through generations of female mistresses, to many members of the Maltese, Italian, French and English aristocracy and royalty. One ancestor was the brother of King Louis-Philippe of France, who died in Malta.

Charles himself had a Catholic education in Western Sydney, Australia, graduated with a post-graduate certificate in management from the University of Western Sydney and opened up his company in pest management, which specialises in commercial properties throughout Sydney.

Since a child, a passion of his has been genealogy. Thanks to Charles Gauci who published his first book on the Maltese nobility in the early 1980s, Charles Said-Vassallo's genealogical interest grew as he worked on his own family history and took a keen interest in the nobility and landed gentry of Malta.

It was in 1999 that he set up a website, initially with the nobles of Malta, then slowly but surely, with further descendants and ancestors of these noble families. In time, the website expanded into a massive site with over 3,000 web pages containing many families.

The project worked in both ways. Not only was his website available free of charge to the public, but people started contributing their own research to Charles, either through their own efforts or through

having work done commercially, by such professional genealogists as David Lanfranco of Lanfranco Genealogy Services of Malta.

All this in turn expanded the project beyond imagination.

The story still continues 20 years later. Lately, Charles has "cleaned up" his [maltagenealogy.com](http://maltagenealogy.com) site, thereby making it even more valuable to the public.

In short [maltagenealogy.com](http://maltagenealogy.com) is an extremely valuable tool for those tracing their Maltese roots and, in the process, learning about their history and other aspects of their heritage.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that another facet of Charles is his interest in film. He has been a producer of many short films, worldwide, over the years and has shown a great interest in helping up-and-coming film directors and, in some cases, forming a number of projects.

Moreover, Charles has, for a number of years, been a patron of a number of Maltese and Australian organizations such as Maltese Welfare (NSW), Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, the Sydney Opera House and St Dominic's Hostel at Blacktown NSW.



**Charles Said-Vassallo**

He is very generous with his time, sponsorship and commitment to helping others trace or confirm their Maltese ancestry. Some 10 years ago, he assisted me with my project of doing a Malta passport database by having a number of discussions with the Malta National Archives at Rabat on how best to go about obtaining a formal agreement regarding consent and privacy issues. Charles volunteered to cover the costs if this were necessary. In the finish, the passports were

digitised and the project fell into place nicely. I am stating this to confirm Charles's commitment to genealogy and that during these 10 years we assisted each other in information-sharing to better assist in the enquiries we were receiving.

[Maltagenealogy.com](http://Maltagenealogy.com) is all about connecting people from all corners of the globe. The Maltese race have been migrating for many centuries as a result of forced slavery, poverty or in search of better employment opportunities.

Researchers are discovering these Maltese links and then providing necessary information to help locate links to Malta. Once found, then the information is published online to show the emailer the connections.

[Maltagenealogy.com](http://Maltagenealogy.com) also helps guide them through a number of connections found and this opens up the door for others who locate a link.



Charles and I always believe in a share-share basis. Though the emailers have an option on how much modern data they would like to add; it is their choice, providing that all family members are satisfied with the posting.

At times, further research must happen, particularly for 20<sup>th</sup> century connections, and this must be carried out by a professional genealogist in Malta for which a service charge is incurred.

Often, the end result will be mind-boggling, but very rewarding, as to who, what and where one's ancestors lie.

*\*I wish to thank Charles, my good friend and "neighbour" for his assistance in preparing this write-up.*

**LEHEN MALTI**

(Maltese Voice)

Omni 1 TV

Toronto, 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.

**LONGEST-LIVING MALE OF THE MALTESE  
DIASPORA DIES IN LONDON, ONTARIO**

**Dan Brock**

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, at Henley Place, a long-term care home in London, Ontario, where he had spent the last five

years, Emmanuel "Lee" Schembri passed away. He was interred in St. Peter's Roman Catholic Cemetery, London. At the time of his death, he was 104 years and 233 days old.

Two other Maltese-born Canadian males are known to have passed their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, namely Vincenzo Mifsud of Birkirkara who arrived in Canada in 1904 and settled in Vancouver. There, he celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in December 1981. The second, Angelo Vella of Naxxar, arrived in Toronto, with his mother and two siblings in 1920 where they were reunited with his father who had come out before World War I. Angelo was in his 101<sup>st</sup> year when he died on June 14, 2011.

While no other Maltese-born male emigrant is known to have lived as long as Emmanuel Schembri, Joseph Gellel of Vittoriosa, Malta, was 104 years, 277 days old at the time of his death on May 25, 1910. Interestingly, Joseph was known to the Schembri family as his sister-in-law was a sister to Emmanuel Schembri's wife, the former Mary Frances Mizzi.

A son of Francis Schembri and his wife Josephine of Cospicua, Emmanuel Vincent Schembri was born on September 19, 1914.



**Emmanuel Schembri as a Teenager**

(Courtesy of Schembri family)

On July 11, 1939, he married the aforesaid Mary Frances Mizzi.

Emmanuel immigrated to Canada in 1950 and arrived at Halifax, on board the *Neptunia* on June 25<sup>th</sup>. Along with other men from Malta, such as Frank Pace and Lee Pavia who were to settle in London, Ontario, Manuel boarded the train which took him and them to the former World War II military quarters in Ajax, Ontario.



**Three of the Maltese Men Who Arrived at the Ajax Camp with Manuel Schembri Hamming It Up There for the Camera**

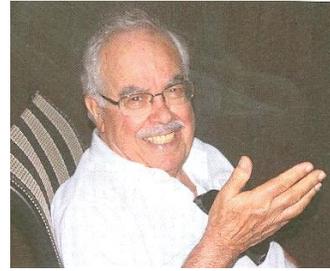
(Courtesy of the late Frank Pace)

Two days after his arrival in Ajax, Manuel or Lee Schembri was met by two cousins of his wife, Mary, namely George and Laurence Mizzi, whose father, Laurence, Sr., was a brother to Mary's father, Guiseppe. George Mizzi was one of the men who came out on the *Marine Perch* in May 1948 and his younger brother, Laurence, had followed, a month later on the *Vulcania*. as noted in the May/June issue of this journal. Laurence was married to Carmel "Carrie" Mizzi, a daughter of his, George's and Manuel's uncle Pawlu "Paul" Mizzi.

The Mizzi brothers, who were then living in Woodstock, Ontario, brought their cousin home with them and found work for Lee at Truck Engineering where they were employed.

A few weeks later, owing to his training back in Malta, Lee Schembri found better employment at General Motors Diesel Ltd., and moved to London. The plant had opened in August of 1950 on the south side of Oxford Street, immediately east of the Canadian National Railway (CN) tracks in East London. Manuel was able to get his cousins hired on at General Motors as well. Since neither George nor Laurence Mizzi had a car at the time, they rode their bicycles some 26 miles (42 km) to and from work each day before moving from Woodstock to London.

While George Mizzi passed away some years ago, his brother, Laurence died just last May, as noted elsewhere in this issue.



**Laurence "Larry" Mizzi (1926-2019)**  
(Back of prayer card)

Meanwhile, later in 1950, Lee was able to bring out his wife, Mary, and their three children: nine-year-old Helen "Eileen," seven-year-old Joseph and three-year-old Alfred "Fred". They arrived in New York Harbor, on board the *Nea Hellas*, on November 20<sup>th</sup>. The ship had sailed from the Grand Harbour on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Schembris took the train from New York, via Fort Erie, to St. Thomas. There, they were met by their husband and father.

While waiting for the train's arrival Lee Schembri struck up a conversation with a fellow Maltese Canadian living in London. Roger Harmsworth, like Larry Mizzi, had arrived from Malta on the *Vulcania* in June 1948. Roger was waiting for the arrival of his brother, Emanuel "Sunny" Harmsworth, who had also arrived in New York Harbor on the same ship as Lee's wife and children. As well as bringing his brother to London, from the St. Thomas station, Roger "kindly offered" the reunited Schembri family a ride to the Forest City. Fred Schembri, who was only three years old at the time, remembers it being "quite cold" and seeing snow for "the first time."

Later, Lee worked for the Canadian National Railways (now CN). Still later, he found work as a machinist at Proto Tool from where he retired in 1979.



**Emmanuel Schembri (1914-2019)**  
(Inside of prayer card)

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MALTESE-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO

### Abraham Vella and Mona Vella-Nicholas



Towards the end of November 1929, thirty-five Maltese residents of San Francisco met to discuss the establishment of a Colonial Club. A committee was given the task of finding suitable premises for a meeting place. In January 1930, they rented the ground floor of a house at 1648 Oakdale Avenue, San Francisco. That same month, a committee selected

the first officers of the club: F. Grech, President; C. Fenech, Vice-President; E. Micallef, Secretary; J. Azzopardi, Treasurer; C. Scicluna, Assistant Secretary; and R. Deguara, Assistant Treasurer. Hence, the "Maltese Club of San Francisco" was given birth.



Very soon after, the "Melita Soccer Football Team" decided to join the Maltese Club, doubling the Club's membership. In 1932, the "Sons of Malta Soccer Team", as the Club's team was now called, won the Redmen Convention trophy in Santa Cruz.

Other Club members who were musically talented organized a jazz band which played at dances and picnics and even gave concerts. This "San Francisco Maltese Band" even played for the welcome of Archbishop Edward Hanna at his dedication of the St. Paul of the

Shipwreck Church auditorium. A dramatic company was also formed under Club auspices. This group put on plays in Maltese for the entertainment of the Club's members and their families.

The Club's activities encouraged many other Maltese to enroll, so bigger premises became an indispensable necessity. In June 1931, the committee rented the large building at 1789 Oakdale Avenue, a former church. The Club eventually bought the property, which remained its headquarters until 1995, when the Oakdale building was sold and the Club's present premises at 924 El Camino Real in South San Francisco became the Club's new home.

Although the soccer team and dramatic group no longer exist, the Club continues to be a source of entertainment and community to new generations of Maltese-Americans. Dinner-dances, casino trips, children's Christmas parties, and other events draw members and guests from all over the Bay Area to the Club. With the addition of women as full-fledged members in the 1990s, mystery trips, bingo nights, pot-luck dinners, and knitting groups have been added to the list of the Club activities. In addition, a Melitensia library has been added, providing books, music, and films on a variety of aspects of Maltese history and culture.

The Club celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at its Oakdale premises in San Francisco in May 1979. Joseph Grech, Jr. was president at the time. San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein was the guest of honor. Twenty-five years later, led by President Joseph Tanti, the Club celebrated the biggest event it has ever had. This 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was held on October 2, 2004 at the South San Francisco Convention Center and featured the Nicolo Isouard Band of Mosta.

This year marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club. With Brian Ciappara President, a dinner-dance will be held, Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, at the Elk's Club in San Mateo. Debbie Scerri, a singer from Malta, will be providing the entertainment.

One can only guess how a new generation of Maltese-Americans will celebrate the Club's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2029!

**Maltese-Canadian Museum Archives  
and Visitors Centre  
St. Paul the Apostle Church Complex  
3224 Dundas St. W.,  
Toronto, ON, M6P 2A3  
1-416-767-7054**

**THE HERMANN-GRIMA HOUSE, FELIX GRIMA  
AND THE FIRST KNOWN MALTESE IMMIGRANT  
TO NEW ORLEANS  
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY\***

**Dan Brock**



**National Plaques at Entrance to House**

This Federal style, brick mansion was built in 1831, on St. Louis Street, in New Orleans, for Samuel Hermann and his family. Hermann, a Jewish immigrant from Germany, had become a very successful agent and broker for plantation owners and various New Orleans merchants both in cotton and in slaves. The cotton market crash in England in 1837 and the resulting worldwide panic caused the Hermann family, a few years later, to lose both its fortune and home to bankruptcy.

In 1844, Judge Felix Grima purchased the Hermann house and there brought his wife, their nine children, his widowed mother, and several extended family members, as well as an entourage of servants and slaves.

Felix was born in New Orleans in 1798, a son of Francis Albert Xavier Grima and his wife Marie Anne Filiosa.

The father of Felix Grima appears variously as Francois Xavier Albert, Albert Bartolome and Albert Xavier Bartolome, as well as Francis Albert Xavier. In 1785, he purchased a lot on the corner of Toulouse and Bourbon streets (later the site of the French Opera House-1859-1919) in New Orleans and 10 years later bought the adjoining lot on Toulouse Street where the family continued to live after his death on April 20, 1814. His remains were placed in the Grima family plot on St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, New Orleans.

It was on June 20, 1778, in New Orleans, that Francis Albert Xavier Grima was married to Marie Anne Filiosa

(1754-1850), the daughter of Silvan "Le Tambalier" Filiosa and Marie Anne Foucoul.

Working with Ray Coleiro of Cospicua and the sacramental records on line in the Archdiocese of Malta Archives, we find that Francis Albert was born in Birkirkara, on November 18, 1743, and baptized the next day as "Franciscus Albertus Xaverius" in St. Helen's Parish. His parents, Joannes Maria Grima and Antonia Catarina Zirenzo, were married in B'Kara on November 22, 1722, according to research by Ray Coleiro.

It would appear that Francis Albert Xavier Grima had immigrated to Louisiana sometime in the 1770s. By this time, however, he had been preceded to the present United States by at least three other Maltese, one of these being John Pass (Giovanni Pace) one of the co-forgers of the "Liberty Bell."

As for Felix Grima, he had at least five older siblings: the twins Eugénie Hypolite and Francoise (b. 1781), Louise (b. 1783), Bartolomeo (17??), who settled in Mexico, and Aimée "Alice" (b. 1787).

New Orleans at the time was within the administrative district of Louisiana, which in turn was part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. It was only in 1803 that it became a part of the United States.

After attending the College d'Orleans, Felix then studied law. He was admitted to the Bar in 1819 and, in 1828, was commissioned Judge of the Criminal Court of New Orleans, presumably by Pierre Auguste Bourguignon Derbigny, the Governor of Louisiana in the latter part of that year. In 1831, Felix married Marie Sophie Adélaïde, a daughter of Joseph and Gabrielle Montégut, also of New Orleans.

With the capture of New Orleans by the Union Army during the Civil War, the Judge was given 24 hours to vacate both his house and the city. Grima fled with his family to Augusta, Georgia, where he taught school for the rest of the war. Once the war was over, the family returned to New Orleans and began the process of repairing the damage caused to their home.

Prior to the fall of New Orleans, both the Hermann and Grima families held numerous slaves who served as "cooks, laundresses, seamstresses, gardeners, carpenters and horsemen." Indications are the Grimas treated their slaves well. For example, Felix's mother, freed her slave, Sophie, in the 1830s and Sophie stayed on with the Grima family as a paid servant. Felix and his sister Francoise were godparents to one of Sophie's grandchildren and eventually freed all four of her grandchildren.

Judge Grima died in 1887, but the house remained in the family until after World War I. One of Grima's sons, Edgar, a prominent lawyer, sold the estate to the Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Early in 1924, the Society in turn sold the house to The Christian Woman's Exchange (now The

Woman's Exchange) to be used as a women's rooming house. In 1967, The Woman's Exchange began the restoration of the property to its original 19<sup>th</sup>-century grandeur. The Hermann-Grima House became a National Historic Landmark in the French Quarter of New Orleans in 1971 and opened as a historic house museum later that year.

The house features a central doorway with a fanlight and marble steps as seen in the above photograph. Inside, the floors and doors are made of cypress, and the rooms feature elegant marble fireplaces. These can be seen in part in the photo below.



**The Dining Room**

In addition to the dining room, other rooms seen by visitors are the parlor, the study, the master bedroom and another bedroom and the bathroom, i.e. a room for the sole purpose of taking a bath.

The three-story service quarters, located in a separate building off the formal garden (parterre) behind the house feature slave quarters and a kitchen containing a rare four-burner, wood-fire stove with a beehive oven. The horse stalls are another striking feature of the tour.



**The Slaves Quarters**



**The Four-Burner, Wood-Fire Stove with a Beehive Oven**



**The Horse Stables**

(Photos courtesy of Frank Mifsud, London, ON)

*\*This article is based on "Francis Albert Xavier Grima, First Known Maltese Immigrant to New Orleans in the Eighteenth Century, vol. 37, no. 5 (January/February 2017), 4 and "The Hermann-Grima House and Felix Grima," vol. 37, no. 6 (March/April 2017), 8-9, in The Maltese Canadian Club of London Newsletter.*

## PETER BALDACCHINO APPOINTED BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

Dan Brock



**Bishop Peter Baldacchino**

On Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> of this year, Pope Francis appointed Peter Baldacchino, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Miami, Florida as the head of the Diocese of Las Cruces, near the Texas border in southern New Mexico.

The Diocese was established in 1982 and, according to 2015 estimates, has more than 236,000 Catholics or just over 42% of the area's population. The congregants in the city of Las Cruces itself are overwhelmingly Hispanic and mainly Mexican in descent. Bishop-Elect Baldacchino is fluent in Spanish as well as English, Maltese, Italian and Creole.

He was born in Sliema, Malta on December 5, 1960, the second of four children of Rinaldo "Rene" and Leonilda "Hilda" Baldacchino.

Rene, who had studied for the priesthood with the Salesians in England for 11 years, served on his local parish council. The family joined the Neocatechumenal Way when Peter was 13. The Neocatechumenal Way is a post-baptismal itinerary of Christian formation first approved by Pope Paul VI and supported by each of the subsequent popes. The Baldacchinos' was the first Neocatechumenal community in Malta.

Despite the fact that two of his father's brothers had also studied in seminaries and had left, as young men, Peter was adamant that he "wouldn't touch the priesthood with a 10-foot pole."

After being educated at Mount Carmel (now Saint Elias) College, in Santa Venera, Peter earned a diploma of sciences from the University of Malta where he studied science and chemistry. He then earned electrical installation licenses from the Umberto Calosso Trade School in Santa Venera and worked for several years as Technical Manager at the Canada Dry bottling plant in Malta where, in his own words, he was "a workaholic."

Meanwhile, he had become further interested in the Neocatechumenal Way while at the University of Malta and in 1989, at the age of 28, attended World Youth Day, in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Both led Baldacchino, after a "brief but intensive discernment process" and being sent on a two-by-two mission, to ultimately feel a calling both to the priesthood and to mission.

Seminarians who discern their vocation while involved with the Neocatechumenal Way are encouraged to place special emphasis on the universal missionary character of the priesthood and offer themselves, at the discretion of their local bishop, in service to the New Evangelization anywhere in the world.

It was "literally at random" that he was sent to live in community at the Neocatechumenal Way's Redemptoris Mater Missionary House of Formation in Kearny, NJ while earning a bachelor of arts degree from Thomas Edison State College in Trenton, NJ. and then studying at the Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology at Seton Hall University near Trenton in South Orange. After receiving a master of divinity degree from Seton Hall, Baldacchino was ordained a priest May 25, 1996 for the Archdiocese of Newark.

Father Baldacchino was to serve as the parochial vicar at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in New Jersey, from 1996 to 1999.

He was assigned as the chancellor of the Roman Catholic *Missio Sui Juris* of Turks and Caicos in 1999, for which the Archdiocese of Newark is responsible. In 2002 he became the pastor of Our Lady of Providence Church on Providenciales Island in the Turks and Caicos archipelago. While in the Turks and Caicos Fr. Baldacchino learned Creole, just as he had learned Spanish while in New Jersey.

Pope Benedict XVI, in recognition of Fr. Baldacchino's missionary work in building the only Catholic parish community and its church and school on Providenciales Island, named him, in 2009, a Chaplain of His Holiness, with the title of Reverend Monsignor.

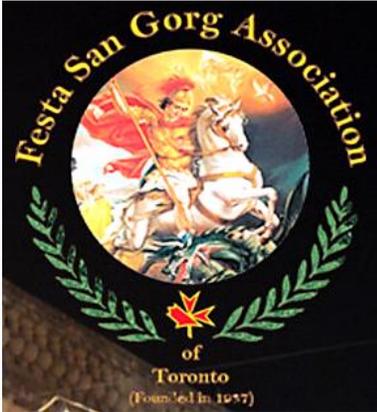
Pope Francis named Msgr. Baldacchino Auxiliary Bishop of Miami on February 20, 2014. Thus, he became the first graduate of a Redemptoris Mater seminary to serve as a diocesan bishop in a mainland American diocese. As his episcopal motto he chose *Ubi Dominus, ibidem Laetitia* (Where God is, there is joy).

As auxiliary bishop, he was assigned as Pastor of St. Kieran Church in Coconut Grove in June 2014. He was also a member of the boards of several Catholic organizations in Miami.

Bishop Baldacchino is to be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in Las Cruces, on Tuesday, July 23, 2019.

**LOGOS OF SOME  
NORTH AMERICAN  
ASSOCIATIONS  
PAST AND PRESENT**

Dan Brock



**Festa San Gorg Association  
of Toronto, ON**



**Malta Band Club,  
Mississauga, ON**



**Malta United Society  
of Windsor Ontario**



**Maltese American Benevolent  
Society Inc., Detroit, MI**



**Maltese American  
Community Club, Dearborn, MI**



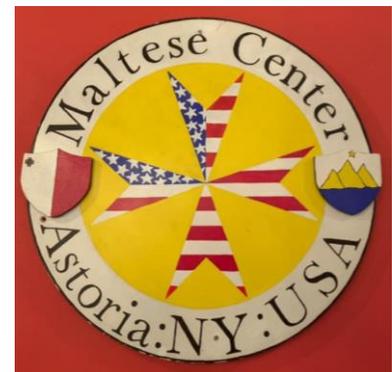
**Maltese-American Social Club of  
San Francisco Inc. (California)**



**Maltese Canadian Club  
of London, ON**



**Maltese Canadian Social Club  
Guelph Inc (Ontario)**



**Maltese Center  
Astoria, NY**



**Maltese Historical Society  
Bay Area, CA**



**Melita Soccer Club Inc.  
Toronto, ON**