

The Clergy & Commission for "Public Relations & Media" wish you A Happy Christmas & A Bright New Year.



Painting of the Nativity by renowned Maltese artist Giuseppe Cali (1846-1930)



"The greatest gift you will ever receive will never be found under a Christmas tree. It is far too valuable to be stored in any other place but in the depths of your heart."

Anonymous

Inside this issue:

Is it an Emarginated Christmas?

M.U.S.E.U.M. - The Society of the Incarnation

The Procession of Baby Jesus

Christmas Activities



Connection

Connecting you to the parish

Is it an Emarginated Christmas?...

Fr. Daniel Cardona,
Archpriest

His Holiness Benedict XVI made an apostolic journey to the United Kingdom last September. I would like to share with you part of his speech during a distinguished meeting with the representatives of British society in Westminster:

"Religion, in other words, is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation. In this light, I cannot but voice my concern at the increasing marginalization of religion, particularly of Christianity, that is taking place in some quarters, even in nations which place a great emphasis on tolerance. There are those who would advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere. There are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged, in the questionable belief that it might

somehow offend those of other religions or none. And there are those who argue – paradoxically with the intention of eliminating discrimination – that Christians in public roles should be required at times to act against their conscience. These are worrying signs of a failure to appreciate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public square. I would invite all of you, therefore, within your respective spheres of influence, to seek ways of promoting and encouraging dialogue between faith and reason at every level of national life."

Perhaps one would argue that Malta faces a different

reality to the one in England. Well, this is not entirely so! Thankfully, it is true that Christian roots are deeply rooted in our culture. However, this does not mean that there is no attempt from some, to put forward arguments in favour of the margination of the catholic religion, and who are ready to do everything to silence the voice of the Church. Each year we exchange Christmas greetings. It is indeed sad to see Christmas cards without any reference to the birth of Christ. Are we also, perhaps, being influenced by this new culture that seeks to eliminate or marginate the role of the Catholic Religion in our country?!.. A Happy *Christmas* to you all!



Pope Benedict visits the United Kingdom

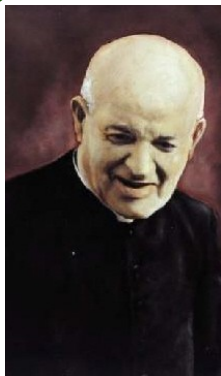
M.U.S.E.U.M. - The Society of the Incarnation Sandro Agius

About a hundred years ago, a young priest, Fr. George Preca (1880-1962) set out to fulfill his dream. Indeed these few words summarize his vision "So that Jesus is known and loved", a vision that was passed on from the very first members of the society that he founded in 1907, to this very day. Father Preca was declared Blessed on May 9, 2001 and canonized on

June 3, 2007. This society of Christian doctrine M.U.S.E.U.M. is a society for Catholic lay men and women in Malta who want to dedicate themselves fully to God and whose main priority is the cathetical work in the parishes, that is the faith formation of children, youths and occasionally adults. Indeed the vision also touched the heart of a young man from Haż-

Zebbuġ, Antonio Debono; and in 1911 the Society opened its centre in our parish. This coming year we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the initiation of the Society in Haż-Zebbuġ.

M.U.S.E.U.M. stands for *Magister Utinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus*, which means "O Lord would that all the



St. Gorg Preca (1880-1962)



The words
'Verbum Dei caro factum est'

on badge worn on lapel of members, are taken from John 1,14 meaning **'The word of God was made flesh'**

World follow your Gospel". Through MUSEUM's distinctive, **'Verbum Dei caro factum est'** (John 1,14) meaning **'The Word of God was made flesh'**, M.U.S.E.U.M. is well connected with Christmas. In December, every Museum is bursting with activity! Preparation for each Christmas commences from the previous year. Every child and youth is given a prize, consisting of a crib, a Madonna and Child or other related religious item, all of which are made by the members themselves. This gives the children the incentive to learn more about Jesus, to love him and to emphasize that Jesus is the fulcrum of Christmas.

During the novena, those who attend can live the true meaning of Christmas through the various activities and celebrations. The founder wrote for its members 'The School of Bethlehem', which consists of meditations and reflections on the virtues we learn from the Child of Bethlehem such as humbleness, meekness and silence. During the Christmas

Vigil, in Żebbuġ, like in every village, the society organizes a village procession commonly called "Il-purcissjoni tal-Bambin", how-



Il-Bambin

ever known among its members as the **'Demonstration with Baby Jesus'**, which highlights the truth that the Son of God became man. This Christmas Eve Procession, this characteristic manifestation of the Maltese Christmas, was started 90 years ago by St. George Preca. As one of the members carried the statuette of Baby Jesus on a white linen cloth and as the group went out along the roads singing Christmas hymns in Blata l-Bajda, Dun Gorġ was elated how the people enthusiastically received this first manifestation. The following year, in 1921, Dun Gorġ told his followers he wanted to organise a "demonstration" with the statue of Baby Jesus through the town's streets "in honour of our Saviour, Jesus Christ". The word "demonstration"

meant a protest march for more civil rights, and members were surprised to hear this word from Dun Gorġ, who was known as a very peaceful priest. But this was far from what the founder had in mind. All he wanted was a manifestation of faith in the Mystery of the Incarnation and a joyous expression of Christmas. He had already realized that secular ideas and traditions which did not reflect the true meaning of Christmas, were slowly finding their way in the celebration of this feast. He had no pretensions of instituting something on a large scale. His only intention was to instill a truly **Christian** spirit in commemorating the birth of Christ. Today this procession is held in 66 localities in Malta and in five other countries.

I invite you to this worthwhile procession (Details below) for young and old alike. Do bring along your children and grandchildren. This keeps a beautiful tradition as well as the real meaning of Christmas alive!

The Procession of Baby Jesus



Route of this year's procession



Procession starts from MUSEUM in De Rohan Str. And proceeds to Main Str., St.Rokku Str., Sindku Vella Str., L. Mifsud Tommasi Str., Hal-Mula Str., St Anthony Str., St.Philip Square to Parish Church where a small celebration takes place. Afterwards, many presents are drawn up for those present.

Christmas Activities 2010

Christmas Eve:

5:45pm: Procession of Baby Jesus starting from MUSEUM in De Rohan Str. (Details are given above) Everyone is invited. If children wish, they can dress as angels or shepherds.

11:00pm: Carol singing at the Parish Church, followed by Midnight Mass

A traditional maltese drink "kokotina" (hot chocolate) will be served after Mass on the Church's Parvis.

We're on the web!
www.parrocazebbug.com