



ST. PHILIP
PARISH
HAŻ-ŻEBBUĠ

A note from the editor

Dear Readers,

Maltese honour their village patron saints through celebrations in the 'festa'. Haż-Żebbuġ is no exception and we pay homage to our patron saint St. Philip.

Archpriest Fr. Daniel Cardona questions us on the spiritual meaning of our much loved feast. James Mistruzzi who has been residing in Haż-Żebbuġ for the past seven years, willingly accepted to share his experience of the 'festa'. It seems that he is becoming a real 'Żebbuġi'! Another zealous member of our Parish, who has a deep interest in the historical and cultural background of Haż-Żebbuġ and is a regular contributor of the historical corner of Connection, describes one of the main attractions of the main altar found in church during this period, called the frontal. Included in Connection is the programme of the oncoming parish feast activities. You are welcome to join in any of these!

I wish all you readers 'Il-festa t-tajba!' Hope to see you around, as you too play a role in our village 'festa'! And just in case you haven't learnt it yet! –

'Viva San Filep!'

Elizabeth



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'Il-Festa'..... is God in our Midst?



Undoubtedly, the village feast is one of Malta's most visual cultural activities. Age old traditions have travelled through generations and have allowed the Maltese to retain their roots. The traditional feasts of the saints remain an integral part of the Church and Culture of Malta.

However, is today's religious celebration portraying its intended spiritual meaning? Is God really present if villagers focus on their devotion to their patron saint, but are not drawn closer to God or to others? Where is God when disputes arise and rivalry leading to hatredness is present between band clubs? Where is God when people find time to join the fun but not to venture into Church or celebrate the Holy Eucharist? Faced with such realities, I tend to get disheartened, for these do not reflect the values of our catholic faith. However, when I see families gather together to have lunch on the feast day, such unity makes me see the face of God. As I stroll along the streets and see the smiling faces of children playing or roaming around the streets, then yes, I see the face of God. When I see youths hanging around together,

joking and being friendly in their quest for love, then I see God. When I see people shaking hands and greeting each other, then I see God. When I see people drawn to the Sacrament of Confession to reconcile with God, then I do see God.

So, amidst all these realities, my heart is filled with joy, for yes, God is indeed present as we celebrate our feast! God Bless you all!

Fr. Daniel Cardona,
Archpriest

My 'Festa' Experience

by James Mistruzzi

When I was asked to write a short article for "Connection" regarding my experience of the village feast, I must admit that I felt honoured to have this opportunity to share my thoughts in a public forum. In no way would I consider myself a "Festa expert", but having owned our home in Haż-Żebbuġ since 2002, my wife Wendy and I have had the chance to participate not only in our local 'festi' but in other villages throughout Malta as well. What I enjoy most about

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the *'festa'* are the bands playing, pageantry, procession, fireworks and jovial atmosphere that spreads throughout the whole village during the *'festa'*. And we here in *Haż-Żebbuġ* are fortunate to have two annual feasts to celebrate! At the risk of offending my Maltese friends who do not live in *Haż-Żebbuġ*, although I'm sure my fellow *Żebbuġin* would agree, I dare say that our fireworks are the best and our *'festi'* in general are certainly among the best I've attended in all of Malta! When I say that as much as I love our feasts there are a couple of aspects that I don't find all that attractive, I guess I am sharing the opinion of many others. As I mentioned, one of the things I enjoy most are the fireworks. I do not, however, include petards in this category. Fireworks take skill and are wonderful to watch. From my point of view, petards are simply noise and I would not be disappointed if they were discontinued as part of the celebrations. At times it also seems, that some of the original religious significance has been lost or plays a secondary role. Maybe it's time to emphasize the original and true meaning of the *'festa'*. Don't get me wrong, I'm still looking forward to the upcoming *'festa'* season and you will surely see me in attendance – especially right here in the heart of *Haż-Żebbuġ*!!

THE SILVER MAIN ALTAR FRONTAL (*VENTARTAL*):

One of the most precious artistic attractions in St. Philip Parish Church during the Feast



Entering the monumental Church of *Haż-Żebbuġ*, mostly, but not only, during the second week of June, when magnificently adorned to celebrate its Patron Saint's St. Philip of Agira Feast, one cannot but be immediately attracted by this church's Main Altar and particularly by its frontal.

The great old yearn of *iz-Żebbuġin* for an Altar Frontal made of silver has been fulfilled during the administration of Archpriest Luigi Attard (1891-1904), when an albural (i.e. a list of donors) was started and work on this *ventartal* actually

materialized ... with the clever decision of using the intellects and the fantastic talents of two most able *Żebbuġin* artists!

Lazzaro Pisani was entrusted with its design, while Francesco Saverio Sciortino was chosen to model it. Obviously, these two great *Żebbuġin* artists did this with sheer artistry, wholeheartedly! The altar frontal was then manufactured in Germany, by the Firm "Bruchmann", costing 800 pounds sterling. This artistic *ventartal* arrived in Malta on the 30th June 1895, and was displayed for the first time just some days later, that is, in early July 1895 for the Feast of the Consecration of our Parrochial Church.

The newspaper "MALTA" of the 2nd July 1985 described this main altar frontal as an "artistic masterpiece", while the notorious historian P.P. Castagna had also words of great praise for Lazzaro Pisani's and Francesco Saverio Sciortino's great work!

References

Ciappara, Dun Salv: *Storia del Żebbuġ e sua Parrocchia* (1882);

Blouet, Brian: *The History of Malta* (ediz. 2004); Caruana, Dun Salv.

Feast Parish Activities 2009

Sunday 7th June

8:00 pm: St. Philip statue is solemnly taken out of niche to be displayed in church

Monday 8th June: Dedicated to Children

5:00 pm: Mass for all children followed by Sports Festival at M.U.S.E.U.M

Tuesday 9th June: Dedicated to persons with Special Needs

7:00 pm: Mass for persons with special needs

8:00pm: Lecture (in Maltese) on 'The History of Art in *Haż-Żebbuġ*', by Dun Gino Gauci

Wednesday 10th June: 1st day of Triduum: Dedicated to Christian Family

6:30 pm: Mass for the Family

Thursday 11th June: 2nd day of Triduum: Dedicated to Religious Vocations

4:30pm: Mass for Sick and elderly

6:30pm: Mass with special invitation for priests and religious from *Haż-Żebbuġ*

Friday 12th June: 3rd Day of Triduum: Dedicated to those in Commissions and Catholic Movements

6:30pm: Mass with participation of above members

Saturday 13th June: Day of Reconciliation (Confession available morning and evening)

7:00am: Solemn High Sung Mass; Hymn; Antiphone & *Te Deum*; 5:30pm: Mass

6:30pm: Solemn Translation (i.e. transfer) of St. Philip's relic; Eucharistic Celebration. Main Celebrant: Mons. Paul Vella

8:00pm: Community Mass with homily about St. Philip

Sunday 14th June: Feast Day 6.00am & 7:00am: Mass

9:15 am: The Feast's Solemn Concelebrated Mass, led by Archpriest Fr. Daniel Cardona. Panegyric by Fr. Joseph Cilia

6:00 pm : Solemn Vespers and Procession, followed by Eucharistic Blessing.

Do send your comments and any ideas to : The Editor , "Connection", c/o 9, Parish Street, *Haż-Żebbuġ*. ZBG 3361