



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

17 people who will not be looking forward to '17

As people go about wishing each other well for the 'forthcoming' year and some even going as far as quoting Scripture, there are those amongst us who will not be looking at 2017 with too much gusto. I don't intend messing up people's moods but let's face it, some have been dealt a bad hand.

decided to dedicate this column to 17 people who will have to struggle long and hard to turn around their fortunes.

The vignettes I will be making reference to are real stories, illustrations and drawings of the melees they are facing (naturally changing some details on the way to protect anonymity).

One: Sarah has 'lost' the job she loved doing for these last 30 years or so. She was immensely dedicated to the cause that she championed and worked so hard for. She was terribly short-changed by her managers. The world will not stop for her, even though this was nothing short of a passion she has been committing her life to. The worse bit about this is that this forced transfer has affected the clients she worked with who used to consider her as being fundamental in this experience.

Two: Sheila has just been given the news. She has terminal cancer. Sheila is still 17 years old, had all her life in front of her. She dreamt big things for herself. She says that she will fight this condition tooth and nail – but the truth is that whatever she does will lead to nowhere, and she knows it.

Three and Four: Marco and Sandra have lost their son Victor in a motorbike accident. They have always respected all of their son's decision but for one. They could never accept that he buys this superbike. They have repeatedly offered that he swaps his motorbike with a nice flashy car which they were ready to buy for him. He died partly because he was stubborn and partly his appetite and craving for speed were too strong. Not knowing how to deal with this situation both parents are now digging up their own hole with a future that looks bleak and dreary. They knew, they felt, that this would happen to them at some point. They found the motorcade accompanying their son's funeral an insult. Sandra did not want them but Marco said it is their way of saying goodbye. Anyway they cannot be bothered at this point, Victor is gone and will never return to hug them.

Five: Gail is lesbian. She finally can say it to herself. She is barely 14 and has been struggling with this situation for too many years. She went up to her father and told him. He reacted by tuning his face. Since then he has never

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looked her in the eyes. Gail told me that she has been considering getting run-over, or overdosing on pills and even thought about other ways to kill herself. She wants to die. She just cannot handle the situation of being rejected by her father, her hero and idol who used to refer to her as his Princess.

Six: Jesmond has always known he feels he is trapped in the wrong body. He cannot come to terms with himself, actually he can't stand looking at himself. He feels he has suffered enough pain. He wants to speak to his mum about this situation but he cannot find the courage to do so. He wants to be the person he is – the individual that he really is. He can already see his mother running off to the parish priest to ask forgiveness for the 'sin' of her son.

Seven: Gorg is a priest. He is finding it increasingly tough to work his way around the bureaucracy of the Church. He feels that if the Church was to remain focused on Christ's teaching there would be no better guide than that in his pastoral work. Yet, Fr Gorg finds himself struggling with internal politics which he just cannot juggle with, struggling between saying what is right for the Institution with what is good with his conscious – and they do not often meet half way.

Eight: Stephen is depressed. He is reading a degree at the University of Malta but even though he

is finding support from his lecturers and colleagues he just cannot deal with the heaviness and the veil that rests on him. He has these on-going feelings of suicide.

Nine: Tereza is 67 years old. She lives in an alley at the heart of one of the villages in the south of Malta. Tereza's husband passed away four years ago and since then she has not managed to find any purpose in her life. Tereza has one daughter who lives abroad and she hasn't got a good relationship with the rest of the family. With no neighbours to call on, hardly any family and little to no friends, Tereza spends her day commuting from home to church with nothing in between.

Ten and eleven: Charlo and Cynthia are in their early 30s. They both come from families that are very religious. Charlo and Cynthia, much as they wanted to, cannot have children and they are struggling with the members of their family to help them understand that the way forward is IVF. They are afraid that if they ensue with this procedure without the support of their families, they will be dishonoured. They are in a conundrum.

Twelve: Peter has developed fibromyalgia at the age of 25 years. He has been struggling with his situation for these last five years. Peter was a very active person and this condition has slowed him down terribly. He finds it progressively difficult to explain to the people around him that this is not just about feeling miserable but that he just cannot make himself function more effectively as he used to. He feels that he is not understood.

Thirteen: Maria was at the A&E some weeks ago. I was accompanying a relative at that time but couldn't stop myself from trying to comfort this woman who was crying her eyes out because of her excruciating pain. Maria told me that she is afraid that now that she has broken her hips she would be admitted to a residential home and forgotten.

Fourteen and fifteen: Jennifer and Tony have a severely disabled daughter. The condition of their daughter is not only challenging for her but also for her parents. Whilst they appreciate that a lot has been done in the disability sector, however they cannot get around the fact that much as they love their daughter

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they still cannot settle with a lack of services and an enormous financial burden which they cannot cope with.

Sixteen: Margaret is a lovely lady trying to deal with the loss of the cat she loved so much, her lifetime companion.

Seventeen: Mario works as a security officer for a private company. The pay he gets leaves him no other option but to work a whole shift as a waiter every day right after finishing his 'day job'. Mario gets terribly irritated when people accuse low-income earners as being lazy and indolent. The issue here, as Mario pointed out, is simply a question of getting into the poverty rut and not being able to pull oneself out of it.

I'm sure you all know people who are going through similar situations.

Charity is not well-being. Mind you giving money is a good thing. However, giving money and making donations only reminds us that what matters most is the time we give to each other.

Ghandi xi Nghid
In-Net by RADU MALTA and 9-08m V guidem

Dr Andrew Azzopardi
Dean Faculty for
Social Wellbeing,
University of Malta &
Broadcaster – Ghandi xi Nghid
www.andrewazzopardi.org