



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

Moral compass

I was particularly struck by a couple of interesting issues that surfaced these last couple of days on the news (this country of ours never lets us down when it comes to polemics, as we all know)

Mental Health. Last Saturday during my radio show *Ghandi xi Nghid* I interviewed Dr John Cachia, the Commissioner for Mental Health. As always his eloquence blended with passion communicated the numerous serious issues that need to be addressed in this sector. He mentioned that he was particularly concerned about the amount of minors who were involuntarily admitted to MCH which seems to have doubled this past year. He also stated that the ill-famed 'Ward 10' even though has been 're-branded' to Ward 8b is still in a miserable state. Cachia continued saying that he feels that it is high time that our Mental Health Hospital is re-settled in a new location due to the discomforts, stigma and clinical inadequacy this former asylum oozes.

Superbikes. I find it increasingly disturbing reading one story after another of motorcyclists who have died on our roads or were seriously injured. I am not in a position to point fingers but motorbikes involved in such accidents are high powered sport or dual bikes. I recommend that we develop a circuit where these enthusiasts can drive their bikes to their hearts' content but they are removed immediately from our streets. Only low-powered standard bikes should be allowed on our roads.

Animal welfare. Whilst we have witnessed a number of improvements in this sector the recent story of the decapitated horse and the miserable violence on Horace the bulldog make us realise that amending the laws and having snazzy campaigns and TV programmes is just not enough.

Politics. It looks like it is going

to be one heck of a year. I just hope we are flooded with ideas and proposals on how to take this country forward instead of having the mud-slinging and non-stop accusations we have seen happening from one end to the other these last 40 months. Just in case we need some reminding: '*Politics is about taking communities forward*'.

Salvu Mallia. I like Salvu. I like his paintings. I also liked his TV show - it popularised heritage and history and also made it accessible to people. I also like his frank way of discussing issues. He must be enjoying the platform he is getting and the way things are developing he will soon become one of the favourites amongst party enthusiasts (who tend to favour the 'demonised' politicians) albeit some insiders are getting tickly. Nonetheless, I predict that Salvu will not survive for too long within the Nationalist Party. He speaks against the establishment left, right and centre and is one of those people who will never fit, just like Dr Marlene Farrugia and Dr Franco Debono before him. These people have personalities that are bigger than the party that hosts them. Nevertheless, such characters are crucial in placing on the table some very important matters that many prefer to leave on the back burner. One thing I'm sure of is that Salvu is going to steal the show and the leader of the Opposition will have to do some damage control on the way.

Air Malta. I just cannot fathom how we have not managed to find a solution to the Air Malta debacle. This is not only unfair for the workers and their families and for the distress they experience but an un-

fortunate situation on so many other grounds especially considering that Air Malta along the years has become our flag-bearer.

Road rage. Last week was characterised by the story of an off-duty police officer who was beaten up in yet another case of road rage. The injuries he sustained were impressive, striking and generated anger - but why are we surprised? This is a situation that is happening all the time on our streets. Name calling, insults. It seems that the traffic police have virtually disappeared. All you see are local wardens and Malta Transport officials directing traffic. The traffic squad is basically focused on Msida and nowhere else. I feel that with the current situation it is this particular police division that needs the most investment.

Meryl Streep. She is one of my favourite actresses and increasingly so I must admit. Apart from her quality acting which is second to none, Meryl Streep showed Trump what humanity is all about during the Golden Globe Award Ceremony speech she made.

Loneliness. Caritas Director Leonid Mckay has claimed that loneliness is a massive issue that we need to respond to. This gets mind boggling in a world flooded with social media and where opportunities to communicate are so easily available.

Winter. In every corner of little Malta and Gozo the first sentence always starts with 'X' bard (how cold!)'. I must admit that I love winter but it also reminds me of how difficult life must be for those living in institutions, in porta cabins and those who have financial prob-

lems and struggle to pay for their heating.

Paceville. The St Julian's Police district (that also includes Paceville) has been awarded for the progress registered in terms of lowering of crime rates. This is indeed good news. However, I must say that a couple of weeks back I passed through a street parallel to the access in Paceville known as 'it-tarag' and I was disgusted at the amount of young traffickers there were.

Abortion. I am all out against abortion, but that doesn't mean every time someone mentions the word it takes us back to the Inquisition times. People have a right to debate all the issues under the sun and politicians have no right to silence people because the party has this or that position.

Malta EU 2017. My expectations are high. Malta can very easily develop into a hub of diplomatic missions. Our negotiation abilities, our cultural experiences, our geographic positioning and our historical context all lend themselves to do what we are best at, 'trying to find solutions'.

Reviewing our Constitution. Hello, anybody?

The Catholic Church. Every time I discuss this issue what comes to the fore is the following; The Catholic Church's relevance as a moral compass sits strong, the Catholic Church has an important role in setting the social agenda and the Catholic Church features as an important building block in our identity as a country. Impressive when one considers that the Church in Malta has burnt quite some bridges along the way.

Ghandi xi Nghid
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Letter

Vittoriosa in hotel magazine

Grand Life which is the quarterly events and information magazine published by Grand Hotel Excelsior, edited by General Manager Robert Grixti, gives ample coverage on Vittoriosa in the Winter 2017 edition.

The Vittoriosa Historical & Cultural So-

ciety expresses gratefulness for such an initiative.

The lead article in the magazine gives a brief outline in concise terms of the historical developments at Birgu since ancient times and highlights the city's unique role during the Great Siege of

1565. It then goes on with a detailed narration on three heritage landmarks at Vittoriosa, namely Fort St Angelo, the Inquisitor's Palace and the National Maritime Museum.

When recommending patrons to visit these sites, the objective reasons for

doing so are aptly and neatly listed in a box for each location. The article is accompanied with splendid illustrations of Vittoriosa.

■ Lorenzo A. Zahra
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