



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

When the Saints go marching

I was brought up in an ordinary Maltese family, however feasts were never really an integral part of my upbringing. Except for the occasional visit to my parents' town (of origin) feast, I had no communion with this occasion.

All that the feast meant to me, from the perspective of a child, was that these seemed 'important men' (both my parents' patron saints were men) and for this reason are paraded around the streets. I also clearly recall the Saint's *bradella* facing the people, bobbing up and down on the Church parvis after travelling over the heads of its aficionados (please keep in mind my size and age at the time). I cannot remember us being too affianced with this social phenomenon. We just clapped with the *imnu marc* and at the same time I always remember thinking what sad and unhappy faces the Saints had - considering they get all that applause!

However, undoubtedly, the *fešta* remains one of the most significant and noteworthy communitarian events in our Country for an array of reasons being religious or other. The interesting, complex and intertwining dynamics embedded in the *fešta*, namely, cult, culture, spirituality, art and identity are fabulous.

What the *fešta* does is create an encounter and an opportunity to engage and to get people to come together, where they can speak, argue, laugh, celebrate, contemplate and (possibly) pray. It's essentially a 'community' experience in the full sense of the word.

The findings ... suggest that participation (particularly active participation) in *festi* is linked with higher well-being levels among young people, even if the other determinants of well-being are controlled. The sheer extent to voluntary participation, would suggest that the effect of participation



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on participants is indeed likely to be causal and positive... Assessing magnitudes could be an important justification of further financial support for *festi* to enhance inclusion and further participation. (Briguglio, 2015, p. 77).

The feast tends to weave a sense of affiliation and affinity like no other. It has converged culture with tradition and religion, within a sense of commune. What the feast does is that it serves as a melting pot of emotions, interests and passions. The relevance and bearing of the *fešta* is second to none. This phenomenon does not only generate economy but it also produces a whole array of positives;

appreciation of village heritage, music, band marches, sense of wellbeing, reconciliatory moods, common objectives, colour, enthusiasm, appreciation of village history, spirituality and a great deal of conversation.

Naturally, this phenomenon also has its downside; excessive noise pollution, litter, fumes, traffic congestion, binge drinking, lack of accessibility amongst other.

However, even though I am not a *fešta* enthusiast myself, I still think that the positives outweigh the negatives.

The feast is also an opportunity for social inclusion, for a level playing field, where the village lawyer and the clerk, the pharmacist and the care worker are all celebrating together, in the main amicably, and this is mesmerizing. Loyalty and engagement in a group (this time round it's the band club) is itself a good thing, because people live in groups and the fact that one is entirely engaged in the community is of the essence.

Since the pioneering research by Jeremy Boissevain in the 1950s and sixties, the *fešta* has been used as a lens through which to examine wider issues in Maltese society. For Boissevain, the factionalism and *pika* (rivalry) between different fraternities, band clubs and groups of dilettanti (*fešta* enthusiasts) cast light on the intense political machinations of late colonial Malta. (Mitchell, 2015, xiii)

The *fešta* also helps us to let loose social development. In a way it is a point of entry to conceptualise the quandary of our social transformations. This phenomenon converges tradition with neo-liberalism (post-EU),

community with individualisation (post-technology), the local with the global, secularism with the intense religiosity (for example, statutes and devotion) and remoteness with participation (fireworks, band marches and decorations adorning the streets).

Feasts keep being replenished - and there is no end in sight, a fine thing indeed.

I think that the constant and consistent revitalisation came about following the involvement of young people in the *fešta*. The fact that they got engaged with the *fešta* brought about a metamorphosis. The *fešta* has managed to survive by mixing traditions; modern music, fireworks that are synchronised to music and street parties and at the same time the traditional bands march on, the signs, symbols and emblems of Christianity are pronounced and the occasional prayer, the procession and ritual present as well.

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The moment the Church distances itself from the *fešta esterna* (the external feast) is the moment the Church would be tying a noose around its neck. Whilst not too much is spiritual in the feast, for the Church to retain its posture it needs to realise that the strongest sense of outreach lies in those two weeks preceding the feast. The more detached the Church becomes from this event, the more difficult it retains its relevance.

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21 May 1982

~~Princess Diana gives birth to boy~~

Diana, Princess of Wales, has given birth to a boy sixteen hours after checking in to St Mary's Hospital, in London.

The boy, who has been named William, was born at 21:03 BST, weighing 7lb 1½oz. He is second in line to the British throne after his father the Prince of Wales, who ac-

companied Princess Diana to the hospital at 05:00BST this morning and stayed with her throughout the day.

Outside the hospital crowds had gathered to wait for news of the birth, with some saying they would wait through the night if necessary. Flowers arrived all day long and were taken into the hospital.

Thousands also gathered outside Buckingham Palace, where the birth was formally announced.

'Delighted'

The Queen had continued with her scheduled programme, inspecting the RAF regiment on their 40th anniversary at Wittering in Cambridgeshire.

A Palace official said she had looked "absolutely delighted" on hearing that the Princess had gone into labour.

The Princess went into labour earlier than expected, but only by a few days.

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at St George's Hospital Medical School in London, Geoffrey Chamberlain, told BBC News the long labour period should not present cause for concern.



He said: "Just over half of women expecting their first baby deliver inside 12

hours but another fifth go onto about 18 hours, and another fifth go even longer.

"There is nothing abnormal with a labour going into 24 hours."

The Queen's own surgeon gynaecologist, George Pinker, who has looked after the Princess throughout her pregnancy, was in charge of the delivery.

Prince William was the first heir to the British throne to be born in a hospital.

His brother, Prince Harry, was born on 15 September 1984.

Aged eight, William was sent to school in Wokingham, Berkshire, and at 13, he went to Eton, where he gained 12 GCSEs and excelled at a variety of sports.

After attaining A-Levels at grades A, B and C, he began a History of Art degree at Scotland's oldest university, St Andrews. He switched to Geography and achieved a 2:1 honours in his MA degree.

In 2006 the Prince joined the army, entering the officer training academy at Sandhurst.

The prince has had to endure the break up of his parents' marriage and the sudden death of his mother in August 1997.