

Gozo Features in the Annual Honours and Awards List

MAURICE CAUCHI

There are some things in life that although not usually available for sale, are nonetheless much sought after and appreciated by members of the public. Among these, one can include the annual unenviable exercise of choosing suitable members of the public who merit such distinction.

It is with considerable satisfaction that last year, Gozo appeared prominently in this list which previously had been obvious by the complete absence of the names of successful candidates. Two members have been selected to receive the Medal for Service to the Republic (Medalja għal Qadi tar-Repubblika, MQR).

Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi MQR

Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi represents that breed of missionaries, heroes of our time, who for generations have given such sterling service in challenging places far from our shores. It is an unfortunate fact that they have been largely forgotten by the Malta Government for their longstanding work. It is really a case of out of sight, out of mind!

Mgr Cauchi was born in Għarb in 1952, and at the age of 21, when he was still a student at the Seminary in Gozo, he decided to move to Brazil, where, after concluding his studies in Theology, he was ordained priest by Archbishop José Maria Pires. For the next fifty years, he continued his pastoral care and mission in the diocese of Paraiba. He was ordained Bishop of Paraiba.

It is a characteristic of missionaries all over the world who practiced among some of the poorest and most deprived people anywhere, that the social welfare of their flock was very high on their agenda, and quite inseparable from their religious mission. For instance, he was active in helping farmers obtaining a plot of land to earn a living, organised through the Land Pastoral Commission, a branch of the Catholic Church in Brazil, sometimes facing real threats from rich landowners who considered his work to be a threat to themselves.



Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi MQR

At the age of 75 he retired to his native Gozo where he still gives service in various churches and the Pompeii Home for the Elderly.

A mild and quiet and unpretentious person, Fr Ġanmari represents some of the best characteristics that this island has produced over the years. We wish to pass to him our sincere congratulations.

[Note: there is no close family relationship between the author and Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi.]

Loranne Vella Zahra MQR

Loranne Vella Zahra was born in Xewkija, Gozo in 1971, and studied at the University of Malta where she graduated with a first class degree in Pharmacy. She continued her postgraduate work in the Department of Pathology, focussing on the clinical diagnosis of microbiological, particularly fungal infections. Her work included providing support to patients with depressed immune response. In



Loranne Vella Zahra MQR

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1995, this resulted in the setting up of the first specialised laboratory for the study of diseases caused by fungi.

It was during the course of her work that she was successful in isolating a new genus of bacteria which was named ‘Salmonella Gozo’, from where the bacterium was first obtained.

She continued to be active in the scientific field, mentoring Bsc and Pharmacy students and publishing several peer-reviewed papers in international journals. She has designed a global quality project for British Airways and Iberia (IAG Group) for global airport networking for the safe international transportation of pharmaceuticals. The study of fungal diseases (mycology) has now become firmly established. Loranne Vella Zahra has been involved in establishing mycology laboratories both at the Mater Dei Hospital as well as in private organisations.

She currently lives in the UK and operates her own pharmaceutical quality consultancy.

While congratulating these two Gozitans, we hope that their example will be followed by others and those in authority will see to it that Gozitans are not forgotten in future annual honours and awards lists.