



The Raoul Follereau Foundation (Malta) - The Order of Charity
is a registered NGO [No. VO/0980]
administered by the
Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands
of the
Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem

DECEMBER 2021

RAOUL FOLLEREAU FOUNDATION (MALTA): NGO NO. VO/0980

Order of Charity Newsletter

EDITORIAL

IHOSSOK VULNERABBLI?

Qed ngħixu fi żmien il-vulnerabbiltà – kelma twila u tqila li tfisser dgħufija, nuqqas ta' protezzjoni. Għandna nies vulnerabbli maqfulin fi djarhom, fl-isptarijiet, fil-homes, li jhossuhom bla ħila u bla kuraġġ, imbażża' minn dil-marda qerrieda tal-COVID. Jien naf għax għaddejt minnha u għadni "maqful" ġo dari. Fil-bidu tal-epidemija jiena batejt mentalment minn tensjoni kbira, kont inkwetat, bla ma norqod u anke nimxi ħażin. Għadni kważi nibża' noħroġ barra, bżonn l-għajjnuna ta' ħaddieħor. Irrid bilfors nilbes dik il-miżhuta maskra li nħossha tifgani u nżomm 'il bogħod anke mill-għeżiež neputijiet tiegħi.

Imma ħdejn ħaddieħor m'aħniex ħażin għall-aħħar. Tisma' u taqra dwar il-missjoni u jhossok aħjar, anzi tkun trid tara kif tagħmel biex tgħin. Almenu aħna għandna fejn noqgħodu, insibu x'nieklu u għandna l-medicina. Għandna lil min iħobbna u jieħu ħsiebna. Il-problemi tagħna huma żgħar ħdejn min ibati bil-lebbra. Dawn qed jgħixu ħażin ħafna, jiddependu għal kollox minn ħaddieħor u anke fil-periklu li ma jkollhom l-ebda għajjnuna ta' xejn u jsibu ruħhom iżolati u fi dwejjajq kbar.

Rayala mill-Indja nstab li kellu l-lebbra fl-2006 u baqa' jbati għal għaxar snin sħaħ wara li t-tobba ndunaw x'kellu. Id-djanjosi tal-lebbra ġġib magħha diskriminazzjoni u preġudizzju kbar li spiss ikissru l-familja u jikkawżaw anzjetà u solitudni. Rayala kellu problemi f'sieku x-xellugija waqt li kien qed jiġi kkurat. Il-muskoli ddgħajfu u ma setax jimxi sewwa. Is-swaba ta' jdejh bdew jibbiesu u jingħalqu u ħassu bla saħħa. Il-familja abbadunatu, minbarra missieru iżda dan miet ftit wara d-djanjosi. Sab ruħu waħdu mingħajr finanzi ta' xejn u ma damx ma beda jbati mentalment. Rayala ħtiegħu jagħmel kuraġġ u ddecieda li

Inside this issue:

Editorial

1

Things Lepers Had to Do In the Middle Ages

2

CONTINUED.....

3

'Leprosy Coins' and the Legacy of Stigma

4

CONTINUED.....

5

CONTINUED.....

6

CONTINUED.....

7

Kif tista int tgħin ix-xogħol tal-Ordni tal-Karità

8

joħroġ jittallab fit-toroq biex ikun jista' jgħix.

Inzerta li f'dawk in-naħat kien hemm ufficjali tal-Lepra li kienu qed ifittxu għal każijiet ġodda ta' lebbra. Dawn lemħu lil Rayala fl-istat ħażin li kien fih u bdew jgħinuh. Ħadu ħsieb li jkollu n-necessitajiet basiċi, fosthom l-ikel u l-ilma nadif, waqt li qabdu jaraw minn xiex kien qed ibati. Ipprovdulu żraben addattati biex ikun jista' jimxi mingħajr għajjnuna. Għallmuh kif jieħu ħsieb tiegħu nnifsu u għenuh biex jirnexxilu jitjeb fis-saħħa mentali.

Saret kirurġija u fisjoterapija fuq idejh u Rayala reġa' beda jgħix ħajja xi ftit jew wisq normali. Tant ħassu aħjar li offra biex jgħin lil ħaddieħor inqas ixurtjat minnu. Beda jdur minn villaġġ għall-ieħor jiddiskuti l-lebbra, jispjega s-sinjali u s-sintomi tal-marda. Issa qed jaħdem mal-Lepra, jgħin oħrajn biex jieħdu sehem fl-iskemi u s-servizzi tal-gvern għal dawk li huma affettwati mil-lebbra u biex ixerred il-kampanja favur id-dittijiet tagħhom.

Minkejja li kellu jħalli warajh ħafna affarijiet li xtaq jagħmel f'ħajtu, huwa nbidel għal kollox u ma jdumx ma jkun responsabbli ta' negozju żgħir, grazzi għall-għajjnuna u l-inkoraġġiment li sab fl-ufficjali u t-tobba tal-Lepra li ilhom mill-1924 jaħdmu qalb dawn in-nies minsija tat-tielet dinja.

Nagħmel kuraġġ lill-anzjani u l-vulnerabbli kollha, huma fejn huma, u nixtieqilkom il-Milied it-tajjeb u s-sena t-tajba. Niċcelebraw dawn il-festi sbieħ u nqawwu qalbna li bl-għajjnuna ta' Alla l-affarijiet jinbidlu għall-aħjar.

CHEV. TONY C. CUTAJAR



Things Lepers Had to Do In the Middle Ages

The rules actually varied by location and era.

Leprosy today is known as more of a medical condition, a bacterial infection which has some pretty horrible side effects if left untreated. However, if caught in the early stages these days the treatment is multi-tiered

and usually very effective. However, in the Middle Ages people feared the disease perhaps more than they feared more lethal diseases like small pox. Once you had immunity to smallpox, assuming you survived, then you were done with the disease. This was not so for lepers.

The bacteria which cause leprosy is now known as *Mycobacterium leprae* and an infection of these bacteria is called Hansen's disease. But, throughout history humans have considered the disease a curse or as a sign of unclean morals or body. The infection itself causes skin to change texture and nerve endings to become deadened. The deadening of the nerves, combined with necropsy of bodily tissue, causes a poor response to heat, cold, and pain. This results in an abnormal amount of injury to delicate fingers and toes over the years if left untreated. Leprosy can also cause blindness and other complications.



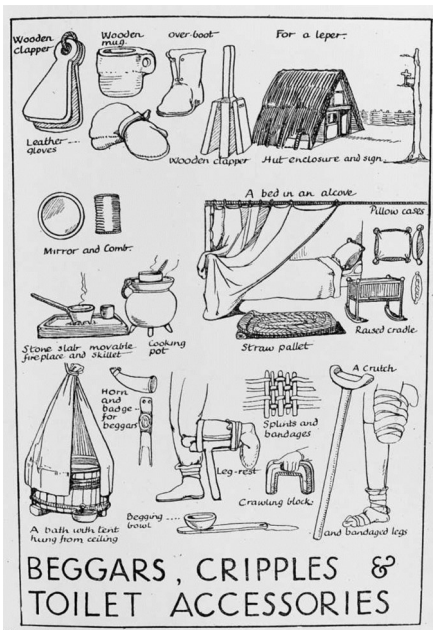
In the Bible, we find the story of Jesus tending to the lepers, braving social stigma and the perils of contracting the disease in order to help those in need. However, we know today that the disease is not all that contractable unless you have repeated contact with leprosy victims. There is even some evidence that in Jesus' time there would have been much more relaxed laws on where lepers could go and who they could have contact with.

This was not so in Europe in the Middle Ages. The ravages of cholera, the plague, the flu, and other infectious diseases meant the loss of whole families. After so many epidemics, especially in densely populated cities, laws and social restrictions on the diseased became much more stringent.

Lepers had to follow some very specific rules in everyday life. But,



because they were outcasts who often had no home, no family to claim them, and no possibility of obtaining work, lepers relied on charities and street beg-



ging in order to feed themselves. This meant they had little choice but to mingle with the rest of society, and as such they had a number of restrictions put on them.

Noise Makers

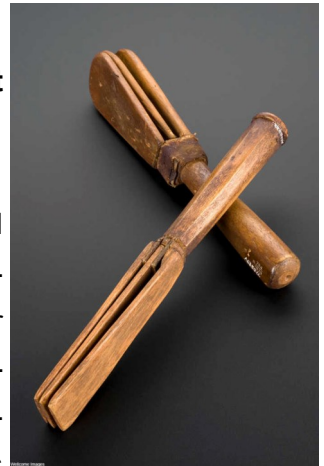
In many areas lepers were required to carry and use noisemakers. The most common was a series of wooden paddles attached with a handle. By shaking the clapper, the sound was carried far enough to warn to residents of an area, giving them time to avoid the leper if they wanted. Bells were also used to warn people of a leper's approach. These noisemakers had the added benefit of being useful for begging and collecting alms.

Specific Clothes

Many lepers were quite poor since no one would ever hire them for work. While many wore rags for clothes, others wore a heart symbol on their chest so that people could see at a distance that they were infected.

Church Was Often at a Distance

Some churches would have run a charity service for the poor and/or lepers, but coming inside the church for regular Sunday services



was out of the question. Instead they could view the church services from a Hagioscope (more commonly known as a leper's window) which allowed them to see a tiny portion of the church interior. These windows, more importantly, kept the congregation inside from seeing the lepers, which might have caused panic.

No Quarter Given

Lepers were often denied entrance to cities (back when towns and cities usually had walls). It was, at the time, a very common practice to simply not let in anyone who wasn't wanted in the city. This could include the poor, various minority groups, and the sick.



Walk This Way

Lepers were supposed to walk downwind of anyone they passed on the roads. The concept of miasma, that one got sick from breathing in bad smells, meant that people were fussy about breathing around the sick.

Locked Away

Today there are only a few leper colonies left in the world, but once upon a time it was more common to send lepers away to live with disease in a community of people who were also affected. Short of sending someone away, there was also a metal cell shack that was created to keep the bad stuff in, but also give the victim a place to call home. Despite all that there were some areas in which lepers would have been treated as pilgrims enduring a Christ-like suffering before death.



<https://dustyoldthing.com/6-things-lepers-had-to-do/>

'Leprosy Coins' and the Legacy of Stigma

IN THE EARLY 1960S, A Nevada physician received a curious gift from one of his patients: a handful of loose coins. But these weren't just spare change. Robert Myles's patient was a coin dealer, and among the hodgepodge of old coins he'd given his internist, three stood out as

peculiar.

They were coins from the Philippines, but nothing like Myles, a casual coin enthusiast since boyhood, had ever seen before. Unlike the country's traditional peso, these were marked with a caduceus, the ancient symbol showing two serpents encircling a staff. Made of cheap metal rather than gold, they didn't seem particularly valuable. And they weren't; in fact, even when they were in circulation, they weren't considered legal tender.

Decades before they landed in Myles's palm, the



coins were exclusively used on a secluded island two hundred miles away from Manila: the Culion Leper Colony, which at one point was home to over 5,000 people quarantined to the island. Myles had stumbled upon "leprosy coins."

In many quarantines, these coins were the only form of money that leprosy patients could access during their indefinite medical exiles. They were created with the intent to keep disease from spreading by restricting patients' handling of money, which was inaccurately feared as "tainted" by leprosy, from the mainstream circulation. And, with their value rendered null beyond the walls of their respective compounds, these currencies also made it nearly impossible for desperate patients to escape. You might be able to slip past the sentries keeping watch or wriggle through the fencing of your settlement's enclosure, but you can't get too far with the equivalent of Monopoly money in your pocket.

Not every leprosy quarantine settle-



ment, or leprosarium, had its own money. But a handful, from Brazil to Japan, issued alternative currencies through the early- to mid-20th century as one of an arsenal of measures to further isolate their patients from society and soothe the fears of their surrounding communities.

Some currencies were privately minted by the leprosarium's themselves, according to Jean Myles, Bob's wife, while others were issued by the country's health ministry. Some, like the money used at the Palo Seco quarantine in the Panama Canal Zone, were made right here in the United States, at the Philadelphia Mint. Some are stout, copper coins that were later tossed overboard into the ocean, Jean says. Others, like the gorgeous paper notes from Malaysia's Sungei Buloh settlement, were painstakingly illustrated and later burned en masse. As for the ones that survive? They remain a tangible example of one of the most enduring medical stigmas in human history.

That happenstance encounter with a few loose Culsion coins sparked a lifelong interest for the Myleses, who together spent years accumulating a stunning and encyclopedic collection of leprosy currency from across the globe. "Bob got interested, and he started looking around, and found several dealers that had them," Jean says, adding that Bob had also seen and treated a patient with leprosy (now referred to as Hansen's disease) in Reno. She recalls one of Bob's regular coin dealers saying that whenever he'd get a new leprosy coin, he'd wash it in alcohol, then wash his hands with soap, and then immediately give Bob a call.

Bob passed away in 2014, but five years prior, the Myles family donated their extensive collection of leprosy currency to the National Hansen's Disease Museum, located at the former leprosy hospital and settlement in Carville, Louisiana. There, gleaming from beneath plastic protectors, are dozens of coins from leprosariums around the world: Brazil's Colonia Santa Teresa, Panama's Palo

Seco, and, of course, Culsion in the Philippines.

The collection, donated to the museum by the Myleses and fellow coin collector James Archibald, is displayed alongside other relics of the disease—rudimentary medical instruments and ointments, antique wicker coffins, and handmade Mardi Gras floats crafted to fit over wheelchairs. With 123 coins and 14 paper bills on display, the collection represents currencies from five countries: the Philippines, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Brazil.

These currencies created an insular closed loop of commerce in their respective settlements, where patients often held jobs from gardening to cooking to clerical work. Their earned wages were issued in settlement currency, and any money they sent out of the settlement to patients' families back home would be swapped out for legal tender. According to Elizabeth Schexnyder, the museum's curator, new patients arriving on-site would hand over any outside currency and exchange it for the special-purpose bills and coins.

Patients had little say in the matter, Schexnyder says. "That's the way they did business with the outside, and that way, they'd guarantee that the 'tainted' money would never leave the grounds," she explains. With this disease, she adds, even something as valuable and essential to one's worth as currency became suspect. (Carville itself did not mint its own currency, says Schexnyder; instead, all outgoing money was sanitized by chemical fumigation, and patients were forbidden from transacting with the Mississippi River peddlers who frequently sidled up to the settlement's fence.)

The fear that fueled the creation of these currencies also mirrored a larger anxiety at the time, according to Douglas Mudd, director and curator of the American Numismatic Association's Money Museum in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "Most

colony currency was issued in the 1900s, and that coincided with a period when there was a general scare, worldwide, with the idea that germs could be transmitted by touching things,” Mudd explains. “Through the 1920s, there was a bit of a paranoia about it, associated with money.” That undercurrent of paranoia was only further compounded by a deep, millennia-old fear of a disease many people perceive as a Biblical curse.

Indeed, some nasty stuff has been found hitchhiking on paper bills and coins, but *Mycobacterium leprae*, the bacterium that causes leprosy, is not among them, nor is it nearly as contagious as the world once thought. Even in more than a century of Carville’s history, no staff member ever contracted the disease from a patient. In 1970, a Malaysian journalist named Isaac Teoh reported in Carville’s patient-run, internationally distributed newspaper, *The STAR*, that Dr. Gordon Alexander Ryrie, medical superintendent of Malaysia’s Sungei Buloh settlement, had sent “soiled” paper money from the settlement to the Institute for Medical Research in Kuala Lumpur. “There, the notes were subjected to extensive microscopic tests to find if any live leprosy bacillus was still wriggling about,” he writes. “None was found.”

Yet, fear and myth prevailed over research and science, and patients suffered their undue exiles anyway. “It’s a real, physical example of how the person who was diagnosed with leprosy became the disease,” says Schexnyder. “It wasn’t something you had, it was you. You were marked, anything you came into contact with was marked, your clothing, money, even something as valuable as currency was marked.”

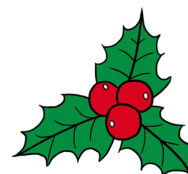
Coins on display at the National Hansen’s Disease Museum. GRAY CHAPMAN

Today, the coins are a lasting symbol of how fear

and misunderstanding stripped away the humanity and agency of people affected by the disease. The coins are also a hobby among a small but fervent group of numismatists, who pursue coins from certain settlements with the same zeal that other coin collectors might apply toward tracking down an 1804 silver dollar, one of the rarest and most valuable coins in American minting history. That pursuit is not always easy, especially when much of the currency was destroyed in the mid-20th century after medical breakthroughs rendered some of these measures indefensible, Schexnyder explains. “[Colonies] decided they were not going to distribute this money anymore around the 1950s, which happily corresponds to a time when they could actually treat the disease,” she says, referencing the advent of the early oral sulfone therapies that quickly replaced topical chaulmoogra oil as an effective treatment for leprosy.



The register of people admitted to Culion. CULION MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY



Il-bank tiegħek fil-qalb tal-komunità

L-HSBC huwa l-bank li jinsab fil-qalba tal-komunità tiegħek. B'għarfien internazzjonali u esperjenza lokali, aħna nistgħu ngħinuk tiegħu hsieb aħjar il-finanzi tiegħek. Il-fergħat tagħna huma miftuħin kuljum f'diversi lokalitajiet madwar Malta u Għawdex, b'xi whud mill-fergħat joffru wkoll servizz ta' filgħaxija.

Għalhekk ejja żurna u flimkien niddiskutu l-bżonnijiet bankarji tiegħek. L-impjegati tagħna, kollha mharrġa fil-*customer service* u mmexxija minn *branch manager* b'esperjenza kbira fil-qasam bankarju jinsabu ferqana biex ikunu ta' servizz għalik.

ĊEMPEL 2380 2380
ŻUR [hsbc.com.mt](https://www.hsbc.com.mt)
MUR fl-eqreb fergħa



Approvat u mahruġ mill-HSBC Bank Malta p.l.c. 116, Triq l-Arcisqof, Valletta VLT1444. 101009 – 02/2018

Nirnexxu flimkien

**Raoul Follereau Foundation
[Malta]**

Order of Charity,
Catholic Institute,
Floriana - Malta

E-mail: rforderofcharity@gmail.com
http://stlazarusmalta.org/aff_0oC.html

The Raoul Follereau Foundation [Malta] - Order of Charity is a non-profit organisation set up in Malta in 1967 with the goal of collecting monetary support for the assistance of lepers throughout the World. It forms part of the international Raoul Follereau Foundation established in 1946 by the world famous anthropologist who died in 1977. The main aims of the Foundation are:

- to encourage social help to those suffering from leprosy;
- to ascertain that these people are treated as they should;
- to help lepers find their place in society;
- to give financial help to leprosaria and missions working with them.

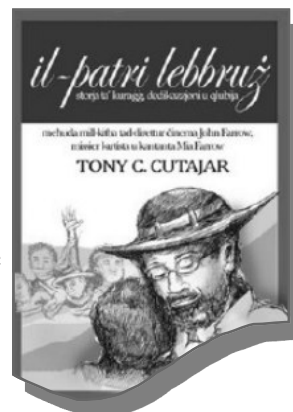


Raoul Follereau

*Help us help fight the scourge of
leprosy*

Kif tista int tghin ix-xoghol tal-Ordni tal-Karità

- Billi issir membru tal-għaqda—dan jiswa biss is-somma ta' €10 fis-sena. Li tkun membru jfisser li tircevi in-newsletter regolari b'mogħod elektroniku jew pubblikata.
- Billi tagħti donazzjoni b'kull ammont li tixtieq int. Sintendi kull donazzjoni tigi rikonnexuta b'rcevuta
- Billi tixtri il-ktieb *Il-Patri Lebbruz* li jipprezenta storja ta' kuraġġ, dedikazzjoni u qlubija tal-qaddis li gie ddikjarat il-patron tal-presuni morda bil-lebbra. Il-Patri Lebbruz Damjan ta' Molokai kien mar jahdem f'kolonja tal-lebbrazi abbandunati minn kulhadd. Għalihom kien sacerdot, tabib, bennej, mexxej, habib, missier. Fi ftit kliem kien l-għajn tas-salvazzjoni u t-tama tagħhom. Jum fost l-oħrajn, beda l-omelija tiegħu bil-kliem: "Għez iez huti lebbrazi..." biex hekk qasam mal-kompatrijotti tiegħu fuq il-Ġz ira ta' Molokaj, l-aħbar li hu wkoll kien ittieħed mill-marda. Miet ta' 49 sena. Huwa u gie ddikjarat qaddis sitt snin ilu mill-Papa Benedittu XVI. Il-Ktieb jinbiegħ €6.50 biss inkluss il-posta. Ibghat cekk ta' €6.50 pagabbli lill-Ordni tal-Karita.



Offerta mill-qalb

Jiena _____ Nru tal-ID _____ li noqgħod

_____ Kodiċi Postali _____,

Email: _____

⇒ qed nibgħat cekk nru _____ bhala donazzjoni bis-somma ta':

€5 €10 €15 €20 €25 donazzjoni libera € _____

⇒ Nixtieq insir membru ta' l'Ordni tal-Karità u nibdha nircevi in-newsletter regolarment....€10

⇒ Lest nircevi in-newsletter b'mogħod elektroniku.....

⇒ Nippreferi in-newsletter pubblikata.....

⇒ Nixtieq nixtri il-ktieb *Il-Patri Lebbruz*.....€6.50