

WELCOME TO XAGHRA AND ITS FEAST HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROGRAMME Thursday 23rd August to Saturday 8th September 2018



THE FEAST:

Xaghra celebrates the feast of its Patron Saint, Maria Bambina, the Church being dedicated to the Birth of the Virgin Mary. The festivities are therefore meant to honour Our Lady, the Mother of God, on her birthday - **8th September**. The Day is one of Malta's National Days and has strong historical ties. In fact, the feast day is more popularly known as "**Il-Vitorja**" (The Victory) and the Madonna known as **Our Lady of Victory** because important dates are attached to this day, two in particular.

In 1565, Malta was besieged by a strong army from the Ottoman Empire with the aim of establishing a base here meant to crush Christianity in Europe. The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem were governing Malta in those days, the Grand Master being the French Jean Parisot de Valette. For five months, the Maltese and the Knights held steadfastly in defence of the islands and praying the Madonna to deliver them from the enemy. When they were nearly down on their knees, on **8th September 1565**, what remained of the Turkish army took to the boats and the armada left Malta's shores beaten. This is remembered as the Great Siege of 1565. The monument raised for the feast on Victory Square depicts Grand Master De Valette kneeling down and receiving the palm of Victory with the slain Turkish Admiral, Dragut, lying prostrate at his feet.

The Second World War brought to Malta another siege. For three long years Malta fought for its survival. The Italian air force was striking at the heart of the islands and bombs were falling like confetti from the air. Bombs threatened to blast out the lives and the spirit of the Maltese people and the British forces defending the island. Again, the Siege was well and truly lifted on the **8th of September** when Italy ceded the war in **1943**. That afternoon the titular statue of the Bambina had left the Church in procession and was still on the parvis when word spread to the relief and joy of the crowds present that for the Maltese islands the war was over and they were therefore safe.

No wonder, therefore, that annually on the 8th day of September, besides celebrating the day Our Lady was born, the islands celebrate the day when they were reborn. Beyond doubt, this happened through the intercession of Our Gracious Lady, the Bambina, as in both sieges the locals turned to her in earnest prayer. You will be hearing the call for the "**Bambina**" very often and this stands for the Little Newly Born Baby, the **Virgin Mary**.

We welcome you to enjoy the celebrations with us here in Xaghra and cordially invite you to join in the celebrations, especially where marked (*) in the programme. We wish you a Happy Feast and an enjoyable stay amongst us.

FULL PROGRAMME

"REJOICE AND BE GLAD"

RELIGIOUS SERVICES IN THE BASILICA

- Thu. 23 Aug** **20:00 – Marian Vigil, *Rejoice and Be Glad*:** Praying of the Holy Rosary and Eucharistic Benediction on the parvis of the Basilica. Afterwards, the statue of the Bambina will be solemnly carried out of its niche to the singing of hymns and Marian songs until it is placed under its throne.
- Sat. 25 Aug** **First Solemn High Mass:**
18:00 The newly-ordained priest, Fr Joseph Hili leads a cortege from near the primary school in Racecourse Street, to the Basilica.
18:30 First Solemn High Mass celebrated by Fr Joseph Hili. The Mass *Missa Brevis Capella Regalis* by Anthony Caesar for five voices will be performed by the Choir *Schola Cantorum Jubilate* directed by Marousca Attard, accompanied on the organ by world-renowned organist and director, Wayne Marshall. At the end there will be the kissing of hands and later a reception on the Square.
- Sun. 26 Aug** **Pro-Life Day.**

17:00 – Pro-Life Day celebration and blessing of unborn babies. Mass is celebrated by Can. John Bartolo, while Archpriest Carmelo Refalo delivers the homily. This celebration is held in association with *Dar Gużeppa Debono*.

- Mon. 27 Aug** **First Day of the Novena: Dedicated to the Victory Band.**
09:00 – Mass for children and adolescents. Homilies of the morning novena by Fr Mario Curmi.
19:00 – Solemn Mass celebrated by Fr Paul Galea OFM. Homily to be delivered by Mgr Trevor Sultana, Archpriest of the Parish of Għarb, Gozo.
- Wed. 29 Aug** **Dedicated to Social Organisations**
19:00 – Solemn Mass celebrated by Mgr George Farrugia, homily by Mgr Trevor Sultana.
- Thu. 30 Aug** **Dedicated to Vocations.**
19:00 – Solemn Mass celebrated by Can. Michael Borg, homily by Mgr Trevor Sultana
- Fri. 31 Aug** **Dedicated to Catholic Priesthood.**
19:00 – Solemn Concelebrated Mass to mark the Golden Jubilee of the priestly ordination of Mgr Karm Hili, Mgr Anton Refalo, Can. Joseph Sultana and Fr Salv Sultana. The Mass *San Antonio* by Mro. Nazzareno Refalo will be performed, 50 years from its first performance.
- Sat. 1 Sep** **Dedicated to those born in Xagħra but living outside the Parish.**
19:00 – Solemn Mass celebrated by Can. Michael Galea, homily by Fr Michael Said, parish priest of Munxar.
After the celebration the church will stay open until 23:00 for silent Adoration. There will also be priests for those wishing to go to Confession.
- Sun. 2 Sep** **Solemn Commemoration of the 45th Anniversary of the Crowning of the Bambina. Dedicated to Benefactors.**

***19:00** – Solemn Pontifical Mass by H. L. Mgr George Bugeja OFM, with the participation of the Collegiate Chapter and Clergy of the Xagħra Parish. Fr Charles Sultana, parish priest of St Lawrence delivers the homily. The Mass *San Antonio* by Mro. Nazzareno Refalo will be performed by an orchestra, soloists and the Choir *Maria Bambina*.
- Mon. 3 Sep** **Dedicated to Youth.**
19:00 – Mass led by Parish Vicar, Fr Joseph Bajada, homily by Fr Michael Said.
- Tue. 4 Sep** **Dedicated to the Sick and the Family.**
– First Day of Triduum
10:30 – Can. Anton Attard celebrates mass for the sick and aged with the administration of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Fr Joseph Hili delivers the homily.
19:00 - Solemn Celebration of Mass led by Can. Joseph Sultana. Can. Dillion Bugeja from the parish of Zejtun delivers the homily.
- Wed. 5 Sep** **Dedicated to Emigrants.**
– Second Day of Triduum
19:00 - Solemn Celebration of Mass led by Can. Anton Refalo Rapa while Can. Dillion Bugeja delivers the homily. Emigrants are encouraged to attend this celebration.
- Thu. 6 Sep** **Dedicated to Ministries of the Parish.**
-Third Day of Triduum
19:00 - Solemn Celebration of Mass led by Can. John Sultana, homily by Can. Dillion Bugeja.
- Fri. 7 Sep** **The Festa Eve – Day of Catholic Malta.**

***08:30** - Solemn Mass celebrated by Mgr Tarcisio Camilleri Vicar General of the Diocese of Gozo, with the participation of the Collegiate Chapter and Clergy of the Xagħra Parish. After Holy Communion, the *Te Deum* will be sung marking the end of the Novena. The Choir *Schola Cantorum Jubilate* will animate the liturgy.

17:00 – Mass with homily.

***18:00** – Pontifical Solemn Translation from the Passion Oratory to the Basilica led by H.L. Mgr. Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, with the participation of the Collegiate Chapter and Clergy of the Xagħra Parish, altar boys and Fraternities.

20:00 – Celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Choir *Voci Angeliche* directed by Mrs Grace Vella animates the liturgy.

Sat. 8 Sep

FESTA DAY – SOLEMN LITURGY OF THE BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Holy Mass at: 05:00, 06:00, 07:00, 08:00, 11:00, 17:00.

***09:00** – Pontifical Solemn Mass presided by H.L. Mgr. Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo. A delegation from the Cathedral Chapter and the Collegiate Chapter of Xagħra will participate. Fr Richard N. Farrugia, Rector of the Major Seminary, will deliver the homily. The Mass *A Maria Immacolata* by Mro V. Bugeja will be performed by an orchestra, soloists and the Choir *Jesus of Nazareth* of Sliema. At the end of the celebration, the National Anthem will be sung since today is a National Day.

19:00 – The Procession with the statue of Our Lady of Victories (the “Bambina”) leaves the Basilica.

22:00 – Return of the Bambina to the Basilica.

(Note: On 7th and 8th September, the orchestra and choir *Jesus of Nazareth* will be under the direction of Mro Hon. Can. Salv Galea O.P.)

***Note: Attendance at the services marked with an (*) is recommended.**

OUTDOOR FESTIVITIES

- Sun. 26 Aug** 20:30 Special Edition of Bambina Fest organised by the Vocations Group of the Parish.
- Mon. 27 Aug** 20:00 Band march by *Victory Band* from Victory Square to the Club’s premises. Afterwards, Great Bingo at Victory Square.
- Tue. 28 Aug** 20:00 Great Bingo at Victory Square.
- Wed. 29 Aug** 20:00 Great Bingo at Victory Square.
- Thu. 30 Aug** 21:00 Traditional Festa Dinner at Victory Square.
- Sun. 2 Sep** 08:00 Horseraces on the main road leading to Victoria from Xagħra.
21:30 Manifestation with a statue of the Bambina. Bandmarch by *Victory Band* Xagħra and *Banda Viżitazzjoni* (Għarb) from Victory Band Club to Victory Square and then along 8th Sept Avenue to near Ġgantija Temples. The hymn of the Coronation will be sung while the statue is raised on top of a pedestal.
- Mon. 3 Sep** 21:30 At Victory Square, musical programme by Victory Band under the direction of Mro. Joseph Galea L.C.M.
- Tue. 4 Sep** 21:30 Bandmarch by Santa Margerita Band (Sannat) starting from Victory Band Club through 8th Sep Avenue, Racecourse Str and Arch. Ġ. Diacono Str to Victory Square.
- Wed. 5 Sep** 21:30 Popular bandmarches by *Leone Band* of Victoria and *Ite Ad Joseph Band* of Qala along Shaft Str and Church Str, Victory Square and 8th Sept Avenue.
- Thu. 6 Sep** *21:30 Grand manifestation with a statue of the Bambina from Nazzarenu Church to Victory Square accompanied by band marches performed by *Victory Band* (Xagħra) and *Santa Marija Band* (Żebbuġ - Gozo). At around midnight, the statue will be lifted up to the top of a pedestal
- Fri. 7 Sep** .**10:00 Commemoration and re enactment at Victory Square of the Great Siege 1565 and the World War II Siege – a must see.
This activity is presented by the Xagħra Historical and Re-Enactment Organisation in collaboration with the Xagħra Local Council.
18:00 *Victory Band* accompanies the Translation with the Relic by H.L. Mgr Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo from the Passion Oratory to Victory Square.

***20:45** The Ninth Edition of the spectacular fireworks display synchronised to music at Nuffara Hill can be watched at the bottom of 8th Sept Avenue.

***21:00** Band March by *Mnarja Band* (Nadur) followed by a musical programme at Victory Square.

***21:30** Victory March – festive bandmarch by *Victory Band* (Xagħra) and *St. Joseph Band* (Għajnsielem) along 26th April 1688, St Joseph and Church Streets.

***Midnight:** *3D Architectural Show* in front of the Basilica presented by *Għaqda Brijju tal-Festa Xagħra*.

Sat. 8 Sept

***11:00** Festive bandmarch by *Beland Band* (Żejtun Malta) and *Precursor Band* (Xewkija).

18:00 Band marches by *Victory Band* (Xagħra) and *Leone Band* (Victoria) from *Victory Band Club* to Victory Square.

***19:00** *Victory Band* salutes the Statue of the Bambina while playing the hymn *Hdejn in-Nieqa ta' Marija* under the direction of Mro. Joseph Galea L.C.M. and then accompanies the procession playing religious marches.

20:00 Musical programme by *Leone Band* (Victoria) at Victory Square.

21:30 The statue of the Bambina is given a big welcome on returning to Victory Square towards the end of the procession.

22:00 Solemn entry of the Bambina into the Basilica.

***Note: Attendance at the activities marked with an (*) is recommended.**