

NEWSLETTER

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To See Judge and Act

A few days ago, our nation, yes, not only Catholics, commemorated St. Paul's and his companions' shipwreck on the Maltese islands. This shipwreck was not a question of bad luck, it was clearly Providential as

we can see in St. Paul's words when the ship was in the middle of the tempest: "we must run aground on some island." When they arrived safely ashore, they "found out that the island was called Malta". Luke gives the Maltese a most flattering Christian praise: "The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold".

Luke describes their stay in Malta, noting several of Paul's actions, but little is written about what he said during his stay. Yet, many islanders converted to his religion! The Maltese were converted to Christianity because the inspired Word chose Paul's actions rather than his words.

Paul met these Maltese, a people of different culture and strange sounding language whom Luke refers to as "barbaroi". This term referred to the speakers of a language which to the Greeks and Romans was unintelligible, an onomatopoeic term - "bar bar bar". A people of another culture, but not barbarians!

It is the Zghazagh Haddiema Nsara (ZHN) method to see, judge and act. That is what Paul did; that is what the Maltese at the time of his shipwreck did. Hence it is appropriate to take the time to judge ourselves and see if we are imitating them.

On this occasion it is important to "see" and "judge" ourselves on the way we deal with foreigners and in particular on how we choose to selectively discriminate against them. We are welcoming to those who come with millions in their pockets. We give them a red-carpet treatment. Given what we "see" in several countries, it is rather strange, that few, if any at all have ever been accused with any crimes. In contrast with certain millionaires in other countries, those who come to Malta seem to have a Sainly pedigree. Are we ever in doubt that instead of the "See, Judge, Act" method, in these cases, we use the three-monkeys method: we do not see, we do not hear, we do not speak. Have we ever reflected that the terms "mafia" and "ma nafx" have the same linguistic root?

On the other hand, how do we deal with those who come to our country to escape hunger, war, political or religious persecution? How do we choose to see, judge and act in regards to poorer people especially of a non-Western culture and a different language? Answering these questions would be stating the obvious. It's enough to see the way foreign garbage collectors are dealt with by their employers.

A case in point. Recently at Mater Dei Hospital there was a Maltese patient who was reacting badly towards a qualified nurse of colour. This patient with a raised voice and in a contemptuous manner told the nurse "you are being paid from our taxes!" Thank God, the nurse stood up to this discrimination by answering: "I am paid by the taxes which I am paying!". And this is not the worst way we deal with foreigners.

When are we going to start acting in a Christian way towards all? When are we going to rediscover what being Maltese really means?

Be the change you want to see, be that change today!

See - Judge - Act

"Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold" (Acts 28, 1-2)

How do we welcome our brethren in need, those who come to our islands to start a new life? Do we still show 'unusual kindness' towards all in need?

What can I do to make these people feel welcome and part of our society?

Lecture Series

Right to Know.

The ZHN in partnership with the Student Advisory services at Junior College is organising a series of lectures called 'Right to Know'. The first two sessions were held in February and were well attended in spite of the inclement weather.

This lecture series is being organised in awareness that many students at the Junior College take on summer or part time jobs to have some money in hand. For most students this is a first work experience and in several cases students are not prepared and in awareness of necessary basic skills and attitudes to face such a milestone in their life.

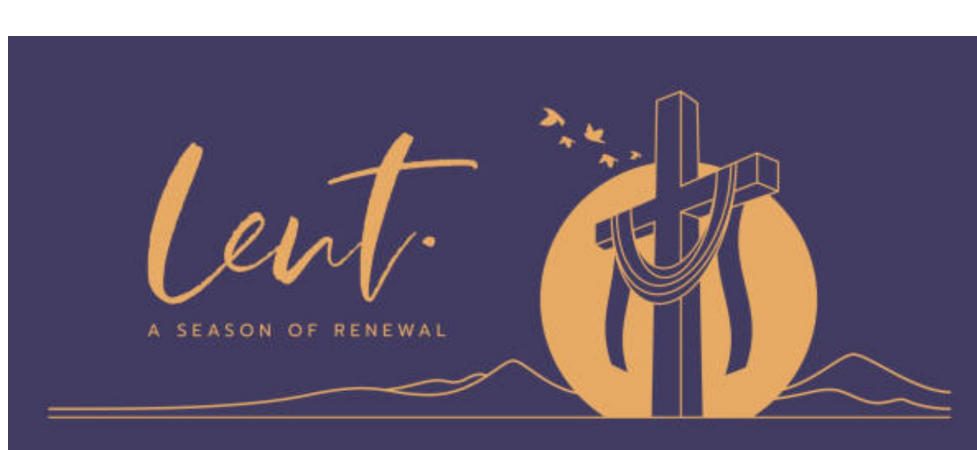
The first two lectures were held as a pilot project with students following enrichment programme units at the Junior College together with other students from the JC chaplaincy. The sessions were held on Wednesday's after college hours.

In these sessions students are informed about the current work situation in Malta and what employers expect from new trainees. Both lectures were delivered by a subject matter expert in employment matters.

Students will also be given assistance to prepare a curriculum vitae, and will be instructed about the soft skills needed when attending work. Themes such as work ethics, leadership, empathy and time management are all values which are being highlighted as important to improve working conditions.

Furthermore, employment conditions such as wages, hours of work, leave and issues with conditions of work are also being addressed.

The first sessions were well received, and highlighted the need of such information to be made available to young people entering the workforce. We look forward to the next sessions in this series.



This Wednesday is 'Ash Wednesday' marking the first day of Lent, a time of preparation occurring six and a half weeks before Easter. Ash Wednesday is a solemn reminder of human mortality and the need for reconciliation with God.

Lent is a season of prayer, penance and charity. It is a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. During Lent, we seek the Lord in prayer by reading Sacred Scripture; we serve by being charitable; and we practice self-control through penance.

Lent is a calling to a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to follow Christ's will more faithfully. And all we do, whether its abstaining from luxurious items or things we like, doing acts of charity, or spending more time in prayer and reflection must have this objective in mind. During Lent we recall the waters of baptism in which we were also baptized into Christ's death, in which we died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ.

Lent is a time of renewal, let us sincerely have a look at who we are today as a person, as a people, as a nation, and let us with God's grace start a process of healing and re-discovery of that which really makes us human.