

NEWSLETTER

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A balancing act

We have been brought up in a world of relative safety and prosperity, to the point that we take our comfortable lives for granted. However, we seem to always be aspiring for something else;

many a time criticising what we see without participating, and yet it seems at times we do not quite know what we seek. We have been brought up, in a system of government that is based on a representational democracy, which representation very much depends on our collective choice when we are called to the polls, whether for national or European elections. As Abraham Lincoln famously said, "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people". It would be great if it were that simple!

"Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (Winston Churchill). We have reaped the benefits of living in a democratic country. With all its imperfections all can freely express their opinions, choose their beliefs, choose to participate in civil society, without fear of persecution, imprisonment, harm, or death. We see daily that this is not so in most countries burdened with a non-democratic government. The latter is frequently romanticised by certain commentators, but the reality speaks volumes.

Our hard-earned freedoms made possible through a democratic form of government are extremely fragile. Democracy requires a continuous and conscious balancing act whereby all the bits of the puzzle i.e. government, institutions, society, and its values must be in equilibrium. One tiny slip and we lose it all. A few months ago, a local artist Keit Bonnici,



artistically illustrated this point with his performance entitled 'Thirty-six millimetre' by walking on top of the barriers in front of parliament.

Democracy is fragile and can easily be lost to autocracy through abuse of its own structures when misused or misappropriated. We cannot take for granted

what we have. Democracy to function requires our continuous intervention, action, and participation. Democracy does not work through exclusive handoff on election day, for democracy to work it must be a government of the people by the people and hence requires everyone's continuous participation to keep it on the right path.

A democracy is a true democracy if the people entrusted to vote its representatives expend the time and effort to get to really know who they are voting for; and continually take the time to keep the people they elect accountable for their actions. Failing this, as Socrates feared, Democracies would elect demagogues – political leaders who rather than earning trust through rational argument manipulate the voter by appealing to the desires and prejudices of the people, that use false promises, half-truths, frivolous handouts, and charisma to earn trust.

Socrates feared that majority rule could lead to misinformed voting, and that those running for office would lack the wisdom needed to lead, thus using their elected position for personal gain rather than the common good.

A democratic form of government is the better choice of the worse. But it requires belief and participation. Here are a few lesser-known quotes to help us reflect on what we have, and what is expected of us.

"A functioning, robust democracy requires a healthy, educated, participatory followership, and an educated, morally grounded leadership." (Chinua Achebe)

"Everybody counts in applying democracy. And there will never be a true democracy until every responsible and law-abiding adult in it, without regard to race, sex, colour, or creed has his or her own inalienable and unpurchasable voice in government." (Carrie Chapman Catt)

"Dictatorships are one-way streets. Democracy boasts two-way traffic." (Albert Moravia)

"Democracy doesn't recognize east or west; democracy is simply people's will. Therefore, I do not acknowledge that there are various models of democracy; there is just democracy itself." (Shirin Ebadi)

"If you want to raise a crop for one year, plant corn. If you want to raise a crop for decades, plant trees. If you want to raise a crop for centuries, raise men. If you want to plant a crop for eternities, raise democracies." (Carl A Schenck)

"Peace cannot exist without justice, justice cannot exist without fairness, fairness cannot exist without development, development cannot exist without democracy, democracy cannot exist without respect for the identity and worth of cultures and peoples." (Rigoberta Menchú Tum)

"Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." (Karl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr)

As we are called to exercise our responsibility to vote in the coming days let us all take the time to really get to know the candidates. Let us make sure that we elect as our representatives honest people that truly deserve our trust.

Believe that change is possible, be an agent of change!



Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi ("body of Christ") is a Christian solemnity which honours the institution of the Holy Eucharist. This year it was celebrated on the 30th of May, with many dioceses moving the celebration to Sunday 2nd June. Let us briefly reflect with Pope Francis on this great mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

All of us are familiar with the account of the multiplication of the loaves recorded in the Gospel of John. The people who witnessed this miracle came back to the Lord on the following day in hopes of seeing him perform another sign. Yet Christ desired to transform their hunger for material bread into a hunger for the bread of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:26-27). For this reason, Jesus spoke of himself as the living bread which came down from heaven, the true bread that gives life to the world (cf. Jn 6:51).

It is this bread that gives us life. Indeed, the Eucharist is God's response to the deepest hunger of the human heart, the hunger for authentic life, for in the Eucharist Christ himself is truly in our midst, to nourish, console and sustain us on our journey.

Sadly nowadays, there are those among the Catholic faithful who believe that the Eucharist is more a symbol than the reality of the Lord's presence and love. It is more than a symbol; it is the real and loving presence of the Lord.

It is my hope, then, that the Eucharistic Congress will inspire Catholics throughout the country to discover anew the sense of wonder and awe at the Lord's great gift of himself and to spend time with him in the celebration of the Holy Mass and in personal prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

I believe that we have lost the sense of adoration in our day. We must rediscover the sense of adoration in silence. It is a form of prayer that we have lost. Too few people know what it is. The Eucharist requires it of us.

In this regard, I cannot fail to mention the need for fostering vocations to the priesthood, for as Saint John Paul II said, "There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood" (Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2004). We need priests to celebrate the Holy Eucharist."

(A [greeting by Pope Francis](#) to the organising committee of the national eucharistic congress in the United States of America - 19th June 2023)



ŽHN Statement on MEP elections

On the 19th of May the ŽHN issued a statement about the upcoming MEP elections. We urge people to exercise their responsibility to vote. Our vote should place the well being of the nation above all else. A place at the European table is not to be taken lightly, and every effort should be made that the best and most honest representatives are chosen to give Malta a voice in decisions that matter.

If you missed our statement you can read it in our [website](#).