Bishop Monsignor Scicluna: The Maltese Church’s catalyst for change

**Martin Scicluna**

The arrival of Monsignor Scicluna becomes arid and the whole world is devoid of hope, well being and energy. Many see him as a future Cardinal, who has a razor-sharp mind. More. He is a future Pope. To him, the innocence of children and the Truth: "The Priest's Duty". "The Universal Church of Monsignor Scicluna..." We are not here to impose, but to offer support and revitalize. Beyond what he has achieved, this is why we are proposing. The Church has to deal with the clerical sex abuse incidents, as Monsignor Scicluna so perceptively said: "The baby is not the drinker of the poison."

**Simon Mercieca**

Is it time for a reform of the ballot vote paper? The electoral system that operates in Malta is fairer in that the present system favours those whose surname starts with the first letters of the alphabetical list. This statistical observation was made by a politician of high reputation, our former President of the Republic, Corvin Tabone. Tabone believed that our electoral system gave an unfair head start to certain candidates. His case has been heard by Mr. Tony Frendo in Corvin Tabone, The Man and the Century. In page 301, Frendo recorded Tabone as saying, "If one looked in the names of the Maltese MPs since 1921 (when internal self-government had been introduced), one would realise that more than three-fourths of their surnames only reached the letter F. Even if one considered that there were more surnames starting with certain letters, it could not be denied that "certain politicians had made a career because of their surnames."

Other systems exist that operate in foreign electoral systems. One such system could be the first and order of positioning the candidates is left in the hands of the respective political parties. This would now be feasible in Malta since amendments made to the Constitution in 1987 include political parties. However, I believe that many voters would not be in agreement as this method could lead to abuse by the parties who could give unfair advantage to a party acolyte. Another system is to have the candidate names listed at random. This can happen in various ways, for example, on a first come first served basis. However, whenever this system was adopted abroad, fights broke out among candidates and sometimes even among their respective campaigners. In some cases, canvassers or candidates themselves slept overnight outside the registration office to be the first to register so that the candidate's name would be at top of the ballot list.

In my view the fairest solution that could work in Malta is to be found in Corvin Tabone's explanation. Since Tabone clearly shows that the present system favours those whose surname is among the first quarter of the alphabetical list, this shortcoming could be addressed by alternating the alphabetical order on the ballot paper. Elections here are held every five years, therefore listing could alternate by having one election with the names of the candidates starting from A downwards and the following election the list would be headed by those beginning from Z backwards. If the parties agreed to adopt such a system all candidates would be given an equitable chance. Mathematically, this description is only affecting negatively half of the candidates. Should parties concerned agree to adopt such a proposal, the alphabetical order will be fairly addressed and none of the candidates would feel at a disadvantage for this element of bias would be finally addressed. All that is needed is flexibility from all the stakeholders concerned and the good will to actually implement such a system. Dr Mercieca is a senior lecturer in Historical Demography at the University of Malta.