



## DIGITAL ARCHIVES WEBSITE NEWSLETTER

Archdiocese of Malta

Issue 3 - Tuesday 2nd July, 2013

### Dear Registered Website User

I wish to welcome the new users who have registered with our website since March. Every day we have an average of three to five new users.

Statistics provided by Google Analytics show that while in November 2012 users were spending an average of 2 minutes browsing the website now the average rose to 12.8 minutes. This shows that users now are more inclined to do research rather than just having a cursory look.

This is exactly what we hoped for. We wish that users will research the manuscripts that are online. I'm sure there is a wealth of information hidden in these manuscripts. It is up to you to delve deeply and unearth the information written and stored in the manuscripts.

We have also added two new pages.

**A.A.M.** gives a bird's eye view of what manuscripts can be found at the Archiepiscopal Archive in Malta located at the Curia in Floriana. Understandably not all the manuscripts are online though we are striving to digitize them all and eventually publish them online.

**A.P.** gives a list of all the Parish manuscripts that are online. Manuscripts are listed according to the Parish Archive in alphabetical order. After selecting the needed manuscript, note the relevant reference code and search for the online manuscript in the **Archives** page

In this issue you will find notes on:

- *Handwriting*
- *Status Animarum*

We shall be very grateful if you suggest to us what topics you wish to see in this Newsletter.

I trust that you keep finding our website useful.

**Fr VicGeorge Vassallo**  
Webmaster

# Handwriting

"If only the typewriter had been invented a few centuries earlier!"

That's often the cry of people trying to read older records. Old fashioned handwriting often gives older documents charm, but it also can be difficult to decipher.

Below are a few clues that may help you out.

- First, read slowly and with care. Make sure that the words make sense, and don't assume anything.
- Watch out for double S's. The first S in a pair was often written to look like a lower case F. The following capital letters often look the same: I and J, L and S, L and T, M and N, T and F, and U and V.
- Don't forget the possibility of abbreviations. Names were abbreviated quite often, as well as common words. Double letters were often written as single letters with a line or tilde above them. Name abbreviations usually consist of the first three or four letters plus the last letter. Both name and word abbreviations are normally written with the last letter of the abbreviation raised.
- If you're having trouble deciphering a word, try saying it out loud in several different ways.
- If you can, read the remainder of the sentence and try to figure out what word would make sense.
- Find other words in the document that you can read, and use the letters in those words to piece together the letters in the words that you can't read.
- Use a handwriting book to help piece the letters together.

If all else fails, you may need to consult a handwriting expert.

# Status Animarum

The *Status animarum* Register, meaning "State of Souls" is a register of people living in a parish and of events related to them.

It is particularly characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church. The parish family books were prescribed in the *Rituale Romanum* published in 1614 by Pope Paul V.

At first, they only contained data about sacraments received, religious knowledge, and religious affiliation.

In the 18th century other data were added such as house numbers and ages. The Status Animarum Registers were maintained by parish priests. They were most precise in villages because the population was more stable there than in cities.

The entries in the Status Animarum generally include the following information organized by town and family:

1. The address of the home where the family lived.
2. The names of the male members of the family living in the home, typically arranged in order by age, the oldest being first. If available, the birth marriage and death dates are recorded.
3. After a listing of the male members of the family, a list of the female members living in the home is recorded. The female children are often recorded in the order of their birth. If available, the birth, marriage and death dates were included.
4. The birth, death and marriage dates are regularly recorded. A death symbol (+) is usually placed by all individuals who had died and are listed on the Status Animarum.
5. There is often an entry indicating that one of the daughters has married with perhaps a marriage date, the name of the husband, and the town of residence for the new couple. For the males, the wife generally becomes part of the family.