

## Hundreds of boats blot Grand Harbour

by Annaliza Borg

Young people gave Pope Benedict another warm greeting yesterday afternoon as they lined the Upper Barrakka Gardens and all major roads leading to the Grand Harbour, including the Valletta Waterfront, the three cities and Kalkara.



Hundreds of boats, some larger vessels and a number of brightly coloured row boats waited expectantly for hours at the Grand Harbour for the Virtu Ferries catamaran San Pawl to leave Kalkara. Similarly, young and older families alike, decided to spend the day in Valletta or do their best to be close to Pope Benedict while he was in Malta, knowing this experience may not repeat itself for years.

As the Granaries celebration came to an end, young people gathered at the Valletta Waterfront and soon burst in song, dance and prayer. Many waved Maltese flags or white and yellow Vatican flags. Banners with the words 'Viva I-Papa' and others signifying youth Church organisation including 'Salesjani Don Bosco' and 'KDZ' were held high. Yet Winter Moods, the popular band whose lead singer Ivan Grech, was held up in Ireland due to the volcanic ash cloud over Europe, did not make it despite their tireless efforts.

As the Virtu Ferries catamaran left Kalkara, 21 gun shots were fired from the Upper Barrakka Gardens. People waiting at the Waterfront chanted 'Viva I-Papa' and 'Benedetto' as the catamaran approached Viset Terminal.

Gozo bishop Mario Grech said the presence and enthusiasm of young people uplifts spirits while reminding of the huge responsibility to answer the questions in their hearts.

A number of young people, some of whom felt neglected or judged, others who are bringing up new families, seminarians, and people in sport organisations, among others, then read out their prayers to the Pope. In reply, Pope Benedict expressed joy for being with them and gave his words of wisdom. He promised to remember them in his prayers and asked them to extend his regards to all Maltese and Gozitan young people.

This edition of The Malta Independent was compiled by Elaine Attard, Chiara Bonello, Annaliza Borg, Michael Carabott, Ian Farrugia and Pauline Lanzon

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