



The dome of the model of Floriana parish church



Francis Sciberras with his father's work

A SYMBOLIC MODEL

I could not resist the invitation of Francis, Joseph's son, to visit his father's Floriana workshop where this model is stored. Francis calls the place *Is-Sulfarina* (the matchstick). "Interestingly, our family was originally known as 'Taċ-Ċomb' (the

family of lead) but today, because of my father's model, everyone knows us as '*Tas-Sulfarini*' (the matchstick family). Notwithstanding that my father has stopped working now, I still find packets full of used matchsticks which people leave at the front door," he smiled.

The workshop is packed with

Joseph's matchstick church models, including the enormous Floriana parish church one. With some difficulty, Francis managed to identify the correct wires in the model that led to it being grandly lit up. At close range I could observe what Joseph had spoken about – millions of matchsticks, each one placed or shaped to fit and create the façade, the dome, the walls, the columns, the niches, the floor, even the tiny chairs. Included are small silver models of the apostles which Francis had made for his father to place on the altar. Gorgeous miniature chandeliers created from scrap hung beautifully along the flowing arches. It was all set up and ready as if inviting people to go inside.

As I gazed inside the model church, my eyes enjoying every detail, it dawned upon me that this was more than just a model, or one man's hobby. Within this impressive model lay an admirable representation of the collective skills of our people together with a symbol of their ability to prevail through the hardest of times.

The Għaqda Dilettanti Mudelli ta' Knejjes website is at: www.freewebs.com/ghaqda_dilettanti_knejjes and they also have a facebook page



Simon Mercieca showing off his church model