

MANDELA - the village and the person

We have to ask ourselves the reason why we are all gathered here today in the name of Mandela.

As far as the *comune* of Mandela is concerned, the name of Mandela for the area around the monastery of San Cosimato can be traced back to the Roman post-Empire period when it was called ‘Massa Madelana’ and cited by Horace as ‘Mandela ... a village shrivelled with cold’

The connection between this and the surname of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela – which in the original African means ‘trouble-maker’ – was something which intrigued the South African Ambassador herself when she discovered on her appointment to Rome that there was a small village in the province called Mandela which had, in 1987, joined all those others who deliberately express their wish to share the ideals of Nelson Mandela. This curiosity led the Ambassador to come and see the village for herself, finding surprising similarities between it and Mvezo, Nelson Mandela’s birthplace.

Since 2010, 18 July, Nelson Mandela’s birthday, has been celebrated worldwide as MANDELA DAY and so it was decided this year to join in the celebration of the birth of this legendary man who did so much for solidarity, integration, equality, human rights and **liberty within democracy**.

Short biography

18 July 1918 - Born in Mveza in the Cape in South Africa on to the royal Thembu family of the Xhosa people.

In 1944, together with others, he set up the African National Congress (ANC).

At the end of his legal studies, where he specialised in the defence of the black people against the injustices of apartheid, and together with Oliver Tambo he set up a legal office to help defend the most vulnerable.

He was arrested many times – in 1952, 1962 and finally in 1964 when he was taken to the maximum security prison on Robben Island.

While he contested his life sentence and was subjected to every sort of vexation and humiliation he never ceased to campaign for better conditions of detention for himself and his companions.

He reacted with dignity to every form of psychological attack designed to wear down his pride as leader and preventing him from having contact with the outside world.

1980s - In the mid-1980s the world began to take an interest in his cause.

1990 - freed in February.

1991 - elected President of South Africa, a role he filled until 1999.

1999 - Nobel Prize for Peace.

5 December 2013 - died amid worldwide mourning.

Mandela

our small village

you have seen numerous generations pass

and have faithfully kept the moral values,

of honesty and universal equality

so that nothing so civilly made is dispersed

Mandela

man of legend

and a reference point for all the people of the world who share the same principles.

A tree against which to lean for support before returning to the right path

We are pleased that at the end of the day

the village and the man sleep under the same sky.