



# The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
1 August 2013 – 31 July 2014



***Dedicated to the late  
President of the Foundation  
Mr Paul A. Attard***

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*The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation*  
Council Members 2013-2014  
Mr Paul A. Attard, President  
Mr Wilfrid Buttigieg  
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## INTRODUCTION

### The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation

The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation was established in 2001 between the Government and the Catholic Church in Malta. The Foundation is responsible for the administration of St John's Co-Cathedral as a religious and historic monument. The Foundation's main priority is the conservation and restoration of the priceless works of art and artefacts preserved within the Co-Cathedral and Museum. The Foundation utilizes the revenue generated throughout the year for restoration and maintenance to preserve the Church in the best possible condition for the knowledge of present as well as future generations.

This year the final phase of the conservation programme that commenced in 2005 to restore the carved and gilded walls of the chapels was concluded. The final phase involved the restoration of the Chapels of the Langues of France, Provence and Anglo-Bavaria. This was a historical event which will see the interior restored to the pristine condition it originally enjoyed.

St John's Co-Cathedral was built in the sixteenth century by the Order of the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta to serve as their Conventual Church. The Grand Masters and the Knights donated gifts of high artistic value and made enormous contributions to enrich the church with only the best works of art by leading artists of the time. The large number of artefacts by artists, including the renowned Caravaggio and Mattia Preti, that embellish the church are representative of an artistic and religious heritage of hundreds of years of glorious history that is at the same time both Maltese and European. It is a unique monument of international importance and is a gem of baroque art.

St John's Co-Cathedral is still a very active sanctuary and holy place of veneration. It hosts some of the most important Church celebrations and State events. St John's has become the pride of the Maltese nation and the main attraction for visitors to the island, including very important Church and State personalities on official visits to Malta.

The Knights were noblemen that came from some of the more distinguished families of Europe. After the unprecedented attack on Malta, known as the Great Siege, in 1565, the Knights, as defenders of the Catholic faith, vowed to turn Malta into a fortress that befitted a military order with a capital city worthy of an illustrious order of noblemen. Pride of place in the centre of the new city was reserved for their Conventual Church.







The building was completed in 1577 and dedicated to St John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Order. The Order was organised into eight *langues* representing the different regions of Europe and each of the eight *langues* was eventually provided with a chapel within the Co-Cathedral for its particular devotion together with an *Auberge* which each *langue* inhabited within the city of Valletta.

The simple mannerist architecture of St John's Co-Cathedral is one of military austerity reflecting the sober mood of the Order after the Great Siege. It is an outstanding contrast to its gradual transformation into a glorious baroque interior of rich marbles, monuments, exuberant tapestries, paintings and lavish decorative ensembles that overwhelm the visitor with an impressive but harmonious vision. The interior which consists of a wide nave with a barrel vault and two aisles divided into side chapels was originally equally simple to the exterior. In the seventeenth century, Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner ordered the complete redecoration of the interior. The dawn of the seventeenth century had ushered in the new baroque art medium and its demonstrative character provided ample decorative material.

The Italian artist Mattia Preti, who was commissioned the embellishment work, transformed the interior into a celebration of baroque art. The contrast between the simple and sober external façade and the festive mood of the interior is a major characteristic that makes St John's such a unique monument. Preti was one of the most outstanding artists of the seventeenth century. Starting with the vault, he depicted episodes from the life of St John the Baptist. With his perfect draughtsmanship and skilful use of colour, Preti produced a masterpiece of dramatic scenes and illusionistic architectural effects. On designs mostly prepared also by Preti the plain walls of the nave and the chapels were carved with elaborate motifs characteristic of baroque ornamentation, transforming the walls into a harmonised though very varied riot of gilded foliage, flowers, angels and other symbols.

St John's Co-Cathedral houses one of the most exceptional marble inlaid floors in the world. This outstanding floor decoration consists of a splendid collection of tombstones that commemorate high ranking Knights. The imaginative designs and the extensive use of symbols and heraldic devices make this floor a unique treasure. Several Latin inscriptions reveal the individual stories of important Knights, their acts of chivalry and religious ardour for which they wished to be remembered.

During 2013 and 2014 the Foundation, under the presidency of Mr Paul A. Attard and directed by the Curator Cynthia de Giorgio, continued implementing its large scale holistic plan to restore and conserve the







priceless works of art and artefacts. A detailed report follows describing the restoration projects carried out and events held during the year under review.

### Appreciation

This annual report is dedicated to the late Mr Paul A. Attard who was serving as President of The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation during this financial year and passed away on 22 June 2014. Mr Attard had been a Council member of the Foundation for several years and The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation would like to express its gratitude and appreciation for his work throughout these years.

His untimely death was a shock not only to all the Council members and staff, but a great loss to the Foundation. His professionalism and sincere dedication were an inestimable contribution to the Foundation and other entities.







## 1. CONSERVATION PROJECTS

### 1.1 Restoration of the Chapels of the Langues of France, Provence and Anglo-Bavaria

#### *History of the Chapels*

The chapels assigned to the Langues of France, Provence and Anglo-Bavaria are situated on the north side of St John's Co-Cathedral. Similar to the other chapels in the church they had each been embellished in a unique manner. The decorative motives such as coats-of-arms and symbols were chosen by the members of the particular *langue* to which the chapel belonged. In 1604, during a Chapter General, the French Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt assigned each of the *langues* a chapel for their private devotion. According to their seniority within the Order, the *langues* of France and Provence were given chapels close to the presbytery.

#### *The Chapel of the Langue of France*

The Chapel of the Langue of France, dedicated to the Conversion of the Apostle St Paul, is situated between the Chapel of Provence and the Chapel of Italy. In the assignment of the chapels to the *langues* it was given to the Langue of France which was third in order of seniority. The decorative history of the Chapel of France began in 1614 under the patronage of the French Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, which is recorded on the frieze. Extensive embellishment took place in 1663; a new altar and reredos were installed, only to be replaced in 1664. According to the contract of service the new procurators of the *langue* wanted to have the most beautiful chapel in the church '*il piu bello del piu bello alter frontier delle Capelle*'.

The procurators, determined to outshine the other sacred spaces, yet again ordered a new altar in 1666, this time designed by the Maltese sculptor Melchiorre Gafa. The resulting embellishment gave the chapel great richness. The dome was carved and gilded with French *fleurs-de-lys* and large floral L's surmounted with a crown to indicate the supremacy of the French reign, whilst exotic gilded caryatids hold the segments together. To pay homage to - and also to show - the long line of French Grand Masters the four spandrels beneath the dome were carved with the coats-of-arms of four French Grand Masters: L'Isle Adam, Wignacourt, de Naillac and de la Sengle.







The chapel was completed in 1668 with Mattia Preti's depiction of the dramatic *Conversion of St Paul* for its altarpiece. The lunette-shaped spaces above the walls were fitted with paintings depicting *The Shipwreck of St Paul in Malta* and *The Beheading of St Paul in Rome*. An artist Kilian F. signed these works. Little is known about Kilian and his activity in Malta; tradition has it that he may have been Lukas Kilian, a member of the renowned German family of engravers.

The history of the decoration of this chapel continued in 1838 when the wall carvings of the chapel were remodelled by the sculptor Salvatore Dimech under the direction of the artist Giuseppe Hyzler. He was a follower of the Nazarenes, a movement that aspired to reform Christian art and cleanse it from the excesses of baroque art. In the Chapel of France this led to the carvings of the walls being simplified. The altar was replaced by a very simple version in white marble, while the funerary monument of Grand Master Emmanuel de Rohan was remodelled.

#### *The Chapel of the Langue of Provence*

The Chapel of the Langue of Provence was dedicated to *St Michael the Archangel*. It was also restored as part of the present project. As in all the other chapels, the centre of the dome carries the coat-of-arms of Grand Master Jean de la Cassière who had ordered the church of St John to be built. This coat-of-arms serves as a seal of de la Cassière's authorship of this church. Early records of the church state that when the Knights of Provence received this chapel, it was bare save for a small painting of St Michael, a donation from Grand Master Fra Jean de la Cassière.

The altar reredos belongs to the early embellishments carried out in the church. Records state that when in March 1646 the procurators of the Langue of Provence were drafting the contract for the new altar for their chapel they specifically requested that it was similar to the altar in the Chapel of Auvergne. Hence these particular altars are the earliest baroque altars installed in the Church. The design of the altar in the Chapel of Provence is typical of early seventeenth century baroque with a set of twin columns on either side, similar to Bernini's Solomonic columns designed for the baldachin at St Peter's Basilica in the 1630s.

The altar painting depicts the *Archangel St Michael*. It follows the new iconography assigned to the saint after the Catholic Reformation whereby the saint no longer holds weighing scales







but focuses on the heroic event of conquering evil. The work is a faithful copy of Guido Reni's painting in the church of *Santa Maria della Concezione* in Rome. It arrived in Malta in 1653, a gift from Commander Fra Alberto Orsi to the Provençal Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris. The lunette painting depicts the *Apparition of St Michael on Mount Gargona*. Fra Bartolomeo Mifsud, writing around 1760, stated that it was painted by Fra Lucas Garnier, a knight attached to the Langue of France, having held the Commandery of Breaux. The lunette painting bears Commander Fra Jean Jacque de Verdelin's coat-of-arms, dating the work to around 1661 and 1663 and forming part of the commission he sponsored to embellish the chapel. The altar table in white marble was installed in 1732.

The ribs of the dome were carved with eight seraphim angels and sixteen little angels holding black birds sit in the segments. The pendentives that hold the dome bear the coats-of-arms of Grand Master Nicholas Cotoner, Grand Commander Jean Jacques de Verdelin, of the Order, and of the Langue of Provence. On the walls numerous black birds, a motif from Verdelin's coat-of-arms, inhabit golden vine trees growing out of an urn whilst a profusion of weapons symbolic of the military role of the Order cover the other surfaces. The laborious task of gilding the chapels was carried out by Michele Pandova whilst the gold leaf was hammered from Spanish doubloons by Antonio Foti.

The architectural structure of the chapel, mostly made up of pilasters, a cornice and a frieze that carry the dome, are all carved with symbols and decorative motives of the Order. A recurrent symbol is the black bird, emblem of Jean Jacques de Verdelin. The carved and gilded frieze in this chapel depicts the allegory of the Order standing on the head of a Saracen whilst two angels blow the trumpet of Victory.

#### ***The Chapel of the Langue of Anglo-Bavaria***

The chapel assigned to the Anglo-Bavarian *langue* was originally the shrine where the Order's holy relics were kept. It was then assigned to the Anglo-Bavarian *langue* when it was reinstated in 1785. Fra Raymundo de Vere, bailiff of Majorca in 1598 left funds in his will for this chapel's embellishment and this is stated in the inscription on the frieze. Embellishment took place in the first half of the seventeenth century with the carving and gilding of the stone reredos that holds the coat-of-arms of Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris. The altar was dedicated to St Charles Borromeo when in 1739 Mgr







Bartolomeo Rull, Grand Prior of the church, ordered its transfer from its original location in the atrium to the oratory because he felt it was obstructing the entrance. The altarpiece depicts *St Charles Borromeo*, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, the renowned reformer of the Catholic faith, being presented to the Virgin Mary. The painting is stylistically attributed to the French artist Claudio Francesco Beaumont.

The symbol of the *langue* is found on both the archways at the side entrances to the chapel. The entire chapel was carved and gilded in 24-karat gold leaf with intricate designs consisting of various types of weapons symbolic of the military role of the Order, urns, cherubs and a profusion of foliage. The walls of the chapel are carved and gilded in an exquisite manner using the water gilding technique.

#### **Restoration Intervention**

The three chapels had severely deteriorated after centuries of use. The restoration project was designed to check this deterioration and enhance the aesthetic qualities of these sacred spaces. This was particularly important in the case of the richly gilded carving embellishments. Over the years the carvings had collected dust and candle soot. As a result the gold lost its brilliance and caused the carvings to appear blunt and uninteresting. Dust and soot deposits had also accumulated on the marble monuments rendering the once brilliant white marble grey and dull. The varnish of the paintings had oxidised and darkened, masking the original colours and making the composition difficult to read. Collectively these conditions had a severe impact on the chapels' aesthetic appeal.

The soft globigerina limestone of the church is ideal for intricate stone carvings, but its softness and porosity makes it vulnerable to natural deterioration. In all the chapels the upper courses absorbed rain water that had filtered in from the domes, while the lower courses were affected by rising damp as a result of capillarisation. The deterioration of the chapels was typical of damage induced by the crystallisation of soluble salts inside porous stone walls. The salts crystallised at different heights depending on their solubility and ambient conditions. Carbonates, being the most soluble, crystallised at the upper levels. The lower strata of the walls also suffered deterioration caused by rising damp through the stone courses, resulting in the capillarisation of nitrates and sulphates that formed efflorescence and crusts, causing the loss of the gilding layer, while leaving a noticeable white salt deposit on the surface. The expansion of salt crystals caused by the repeated fluctuations of







relative humidity within the church was the main cause of damage including micro-decohesion, disintegration of the stone structure, lifting, detachment and losses of fragments of the paint and gilding film, blooming, staining and encrustations. Another detrimental effect caused by the movement of soluble salts was extensive blanching on the gilt and painted surface of the walls.

The restoration project consisted of diagnostic tests of the paint and gilt layers to identify the original materials and methods of application used in the seventeenth century. The appropriate methodology for the restoration was planned based on the results. The initial phase of the restoration consisted of preservation measures to consolidate detached paint and gilt layers by injecting specific resin-based adhesives. This was followed by removing the large quantities of superficial dust by vacuum suction and soft brushes.

The gilt carvings and painted areas were cleaned using various methods depending on the original technique used. Often deionised water was sufficient to achieve good results. The exception was the layer of linseed oil applied on the lower courses which was removed using alkaline solutions, with stubborn encrustations being removed with diluted chemical solutions. Particular attention was given to areas affected by salts and nitrates. These stone surfaces were treated with poultices for desalinating and cleansing.

The next step was to repair open mortar joints and minor cracks with a hydraulic lime-based mortar known for its compatibility with limestone. Any missing parts of the carvings were reconstructed with cellulose pulp because its composition is light and suitable for reconstructions. Its properties also control humidity absorption from the wall, sustaining the repairs more efficiently. Re-gilding with 24-karat gold leaf imported from Florence was carried out using two different techniques according to the original methods used in the seventeenth century. In the oil mordant gilding technique the stone carvings were prepared with a wash of red lime-based paint to enhance the colour of the gold leaf. The oil mordant was then applied and the gold leaf transferred to the carvings. In the areas that had been gilded with water gilding, known as the *bolo* technique, two layers of *bolo* made from red clay were applied and the gold leaf fixed with rabbit skin glue. The damaged area that had been decorated with wall painting was integrated using water based paints.

The canvas paintings were brought down from their location and transferred to the temporary laboratory set up within the Co-Cathedral. Diagnostic tests using non-invasive methods were carried







out and the paintings were graphically documented. Successive layers of oxidised varnish had affected the aesthetic appearance and advanced craquelure was pulling away at the paint and ground layers and had led to some losses of the paint layer. A series of cleaning tests were carried out to find the appropriate methodology to clean each painting, as each case is different. For these paintings acetone was used to lift the layers of oxidised varnish. Some over-painting in *The Conversion of St Paul* was removed since it had been carried out during a previous restoration attempt. Small losses in the paint layer were filled and retouched with varnish colours using a reversible method that is easily identified from the original. The linings that had been applied in a previous restoration attempt were removed and strip lining was applied to the edges of the canvas that had become frail or had deteriorated with the passage of time. For *The Conversion of St Paul* the original wooden frame was retained and an innovative spring stretch system was designed using stainless steel materials attached to the frame. The original wooden stretchers were treated for infestation and strengthened. Finally, the paintings were then varnished and placed back in their original positions within the chapels. The restoration of these chapels was entrusted to *Kultura Restauro Ltd* headed by Prof Luigi Pisani.







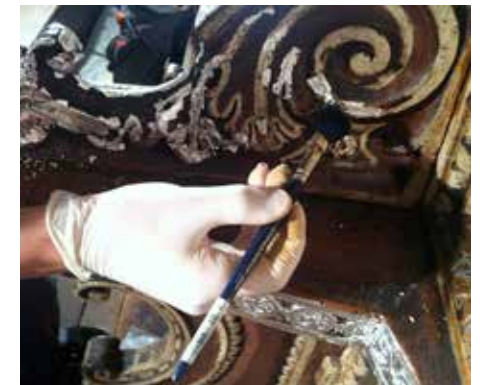
## 1.2 Restoration of the Choir Stalls and Lectern

The wooden choir stalls and lectern are situated in the presbytery behind the High Altar. The intricate carvings that embellish the choir and lectern reflect the prevailing mannerist style of the late sixteenth century. The choir stalls were made out of walnut and arrived at St John's towards the end of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Grand Master Fra Martin Garzes. The benefactor who covered the expenses was the Prior of the Church Fra Giorgio Giampieri. The choir consists of two tiers arranged at appropriate heights. They consist of fifty-two pews, including two thrones for the use of the Prior of the Church and the Vice-chancellor of the Order. The upper tier was used by the members of the Chapter and the lower for the conventual chaplains.

The lectern was used to hold the choral books in the centre of the choir. It is similar to the late mannerist style of the choir. It is constructed of a square base with panels that open to provide storage for the choral books. The four wooden panels at the base of the lectern are carved with episodes from the life of St John the Baptist. The stand for the choral books is adorned with two angels holding a shield carved with the coat-of-arms of Grand Master Jean La Cassière and, on the other side, those of Grand Master Ramon Perellos, with a central miniature of St. John the Baptist. The choir stalls are intricately decorated with gilt carvings. They are still in use during church services.

The preservation of these artefacts was necessary on account of the accumulation of dirt and darkened varnish that occurred over several years. The use of the stalls had caused abrasion of the gilt and some losses of the delicate carvings. The choir stalls and lectern were in a relatively good structural condition. Following a decision taken by the Foundation to restore the choir stalls, a call for tenders for their restoration/conservation was issued. The contract was awarded to wood restorer James Saliba of Wood Conservation Ltd. The project commenced with scientific studies including wood identification and stratigraphic analysis of the pictorial layer. This was followed by disinfestations against the activity of micro-organisms, cleaning and structural consolidation.

The major part of the project consisted of cleaning the surface from tarnished varnish and overpainting of the gilded decorative motifs. The stratigraphic studies showed that there were several attempts to restore the decorative motifs and that these motifs were







originally embellished with gold leaf. The studies showed that the original gilding carried out with gold leaf had severely abraded. They also led to the later decorative attempts being carried out using silver leaf and treated with a varnish to simulate a gold rich surface. Silver is naturally more vulnerable to tarnishing by oxidation. This procedure is the reason for the darkened effect of the decorative gilt motifs. Minimal restoration was therefore adopted for this project and the most recent decorative scheme was preserved. After the tarnished varnish had been removed, silver leaf was applied to the abraded areas and treated with varnish to retain the golden effect as was originally intended. The pictorial schemes were reintegrated. The choir stalls and lectern were treated with protective waxes and polished to a satin finish retaining the original patina.







### 1.3 Conservation of the altar of St Charles Borromeo, Chapel of the Langue of Anglo Bavaria

The eighteenth century altar is dedicated to St Charles Borromeo and is found in the Chapel of the Langue of Anglo Bavaria. In 1739, during the pastoral visit of the Prior of the church Monsignor Fra Bartolomeo Rull, the altar was transferred from the entrance to the oratory to its present site according to his direction. A new altar incorporating the painting was installed. It is composed of an altar table made out of marble carved with delicate decorative motifs and a marble frame for the painting that depicts *St Charles Borromeo*. It is surrounded with an imposing marble-clad reredos made from particularly fine and rare polychrome marbles, including *Bianco di Carrara*, *Rosso di Siena* and *Verde Antico*. The remains of St Clement martyr were installed within the altar table. Two reliquaries containing several relics of the church are placed within the recess beneath the painting.

The altar was examined and found to be structurally in good condition; however, it had lost its lustre and appeared dull owing to the thick layer of dust and candle soot that had accumulated on the surfaces over the years. The altar was also covered with wax dripping and several layers of discoloured wax that contributed to the dull appearance of the altar and the reredos. Tests were carried out to determine the most suitable cleaning method. The restoration process consisted of the removal of dirt and old waxes using the appropriate cleaning solutions and thorough rinsing with deionised water. The marbles were then given a protective layer of wax and buffed to the desired finish. The restoration was carried out by Mr Raymond Farrugia, in-house marble restorer with the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation.







#### 1.4 Restoration of the Flemish Tapestries

The restoration project that the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation started in 2006 progresses this year with another two tapestries being restored by the Royal Manufacturers De Wit Laboratories in Belgium. In the year under review the tapestries depicting '*The Adoration of the Magi*' and '*The Entry into Jerusalem*' were sent for restoration.

The tapestries were woven at the Flemish atelier of Judocus de Vos in the late seventeenth century following their commission by Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful who had just been elected Grand Master and wished to furnish the nave of the Knights' Conventual Church of St John in Valletta with a series of tapestries to be hung on specific feasts. The larger tapestries of the set were woven on cartoons based on creations by the renowned Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens. The set consists of twenty-nine pieces and is the largest collection of Flemish tapestries in the world. One tapestry portrays the benefactor, Grand Master Perellos. The fourteen large tapestries measure approximately 6.50 by 6.00 metres and depict scenes from the life of Christ and allegories portraying the principal and fundamental divine truths of the Catholic faith. Another fourteen smaller panels represent the Virgin Mary, Christ the Saviour and the Apostles.

The tapestries were woven in pure silk and wool and since textiles are susceptible to deterioration with the passage of time their restoration was necessary in order to preserve them. The restoration process consists of the removal of accumulated dust from the surface, followed by the application of a fine mist solution of water and solvents until the fabric is thoroughly cleansed. The tapestry is dried by a special quick-drying process to avoid shrinkage. Earlier restoration interventions are then removed, loose parts and threads are consolidated and open seams repaired. The tapestry is then fitted with a new supportive backing and lining to prevent deterioration.

The Foundation was provided with air transport for the tapestries to and from Belgium courtesy of the Belgian Ministry of Defence and with the assistance of the Belgian Ambassador to Malta, H. E. Mr Vincent Mertens de Wilmars and the Maltese Ambassador in Belgium, H. E. Ms Vanessa Frazier.







### 1.5 Conservation of the Inlaid Marble Floor

The unique floor of the Co-Cathedral consists of four hundred inlaid marble tombstones dating from the early seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The tombstones mark the resting places of some of the most illustrious Knights of the Order coming from different European regions. The majority of the designs for the marble tombstones were made by renowned artists and were often executed by Maltese craftsmen. They are all original in design and as a result they are truly unique works of art. Each one is made of a large marble slab that is inlaid with polychrome marble and embellished with symbols of virtues and of death and immortality, such as eagles, lions, crowns, skeletons, skulls and angels. The delicately engraved Latin epitaphs, together with a range of symbols, illustrate the life story of the deceased as well as his valorous deeds and achievements.

Though marble is considered to be an enduring material it suffers from damage caused by abrasion. The thin inlaid marble designs and motifs on the tombstones are also susceptible to cracking caused by weight and the passage of time, and this leads to losses in the inlaid marble layer. The restoration of the inlaid marble tombstones is carried out according to a prior conservation management plan.

The Foundation employs two marble restorers to repair and preserve the tombstones as well as the marble monuments. The laborious work involves the skilful consolidation of any loose parts and the replacement of missing pieces. The restoration of the tombstones is an arduous task and is the main occupation of the in-house marble restorer Jesmond Bartolo. The restoration and conservation of this precious floor consists of replacing the missing inlaid parts with matching marble, often very difficult to obtain, using the appropriate techniques. All restoration is recorded and documented.

Restoration intervention was carried out on the tombstone of Fra Leopold Ignaz von Sauer Ankenstein, situated in the Chapel of Germany, which was lifted since it was fractured in two parts. The restoration consisted of restoring the fractures with the use of fibreglass rods. Restoration attempts with additional materials were removed and losses in the inlay were replaced. The inscription was conserved and made legible again.

An additional twenty-two tombstones were conserved during this year. The aim was to restore missing parts of inlaid decorative







designs. All the tombstones in the main nave were examined and those with losses were cleaned and restored. The restored tombstones include those of Didaco Mario Gargallo and Giovanni Battista Ansidei near the side door at the main entrance, and Jean Hector de Fay de la Tour Maubourg and Gerolamo Antonio Bagnano, two of the larger tombstones within St John's. The restoration of the tombstones is carried out under the direction of Francesca Muscat, the Foundation's conservator.

In order to protect the tombstones from further abrasion caused primarily by visitors who walk through the Co-Cathedral on a daily basis, the tourist route on the Co-Cathedral floor is covered by a specially made protective carpet.







## 2. CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE WORKS

### 2.1 Oratory Membrane

The oratory was built in 1602 during the reign of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt as a place of devotion for young novices of the Order. It holds paintings by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio depicting *The Martyrdom of St John the Baptist* and *St Jerome Writing*. The ceiling is fitted with a carved and gilded Venetian style soffit containing three paintings by Mattia Preti. The Oratory is further adorned with paintings depicting various saints of the order also by Preti.

The restoration of the Oratory is due to commence next year. In this regard conservation began with repairs needed on the exterior. This year the repairs required on the roof was carried out with the application of a new waterproofing system.

The existing membrane and the original *deffun* finish were repaired, following which an approved proprietary liquid membrane system including primers and protection layers was applied on the roof and existing joints.

The works were carried out by Sparkbow Ltd.







### 3. OPERATIONAL PROJECTS

#### 3.1 Folding Chairs

Lightweight folding chairs were purchased to complement the current chairs available for the various functions held at St John's Co-Cathedral. The chairs came with two trolleys for easy storage and transportation.

#### 3.2 Custodian Uniforms

The custodians were fitted with a uniform comprising a navy blue suit with burgundy ties/scarves to match the Foundation's logo. Overcoats were added later for the winter season.

#### 3.3 Public Restrooms

The public restrooms were refurbished including plumbing, re-tiling and installation of new bathroom furniture. All apertures were also replaced.

#### 3.4 Entrance and Stairwell on Republic Street

Refurbishing and maintenance work was carried out in the stairwell and entrance overlooking Republic Street.

#### 3.5 Audio Guides and Flyers

St John's Co-Cathedral visitors are provided with an audio guide to enhance their visit with a detailed explanation of the building and the various artefacts within. The audio guides are available in eight different languages with Russian and Japanese as the latest additions.

Six new narrations were included in the audio guide covering the stages of the Sacristy, the Chapels of the Langues of France, Provence, Auvergne and Anglo-Bavaria and the Chapel of Our Lady of Philermos, thus bringing the total to twenty-four stages. The audio guide desks were also refurbished.





## 4. PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

### 4.1 *Notte Bianca*

The annual *Notte Bianca* event took place on 3 October 2013. Once again the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation opened the doors of the Co-Cathedral, Oratory and Museum between 19:00 hrs and midnight during this event and a total of 7,100 visitors entered free of charge to enjoy the splendours within. Flyers with information about the latest restoration projects were handed out whilst guided tours in both Maltese and English of the church and the oratory were held at frequent intervals. The public could also observe various restoration works being carried out *in situ*.

### 4.2 *St Michael the Archangel Lecture*

On 23 October 2013 Dr Theresa Vella, art historian and visiting lecturer at the International Institute of Baroque Studies at the University of Malta, delivered a lecture at St John's Co-Cathedral entitled '*The Gift of Wings: the Arrival of the St Michael Archangel Altarpiece in the Chapel of Provence*'. Dr Vella presented her findings on the long-elusive identity of the author of the altar painting.

### 4.3 *European Heritage Day*

The European Heritage Day was launched by the Council of Europe, joined later by the European Union, to create a day that would be the cultural event most widely celebrated by the citizens of Europe.

St John's Co-Cathedral, Oratory and Museum participated in this event held on 26 October 2013 by opening its doors between 14:00 hrs and 17:00 hrs for free entrance to visitors. This opportunity was taken up by 560 visitors.

### 4.4 *Chapel of Auvergne Lecture*

Following the conservation and restoration works on the Chapel of the Langue of Auvergne a lecture on the restoration process of the chapel was held on 4 December 2013 by *Iconos Restauri*, represented by Dott.essa Daniela Murphy and Dott. Simone Vettori, the restorers responsible for the works.

*Iconos Restauri* demonstrated the restoration project which consisted of the restoration of the gilded wall carvings, the reredos, the two lunette paintings depicting *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian* and *St Sebastian meeting Pope Pius Caius on his way to martyrdom*, and the titular painting of *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian*.





#### 4.5 International Museum Day

Museums all over the globe celebrated International Museum Day on Saturday 17 May 2014. The St John's Co-Cathedral, Oratory and Museum took part in this event by opening free of charge during the afternoon between 13:00 hrs and 17:00 hrs. 830 visitors took this opportunity to appreciate the grandeur the church offers.

#### 4.6 Stato dell'Arte, Bologna

Ms Cynthia de Giorgio, curator of St John's Co-Cathedral attended the seminar *Stato dell'Arte*, held between 10 and 12 October 2013 in Bologna, Italy. She presented a paper entitled *Conservazione e Restauro della Concattedrale di San Giovanni: Un Percorso di Dieci Anni*.





## 5. CONCERTS

- A concert of Sacred Works by Ferdinando and Giuseppe Camilleri was held on Wednesday 16 October 2013 under the direction of Mro. Hermann Farrugia-Frantz with the participation of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, *Coro Bel Canto* and Soloists. This concert was organised by the Franciscan Province of the Friars Minor Order on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary from its elevation to a Franciscan Province in Malta.
- A concert of Sacred Music by Joseph Haydn, Gioacchino, Rossini and Giuseppe Verdi was organised by Terramundi on Monday 25 November 2013. The musical direction was by Mro. Prof. Dion Buhagiar with the participation of the *Collegium Musicum Choir*.
- The annual Christmas Concert was held on Friday 20 December 2013 by the *Collegium Musicum Choir* under the direction of Mro. Prof. Dion Buhagiar.
- A Mass in B Minor by J.S. Bach with the participation of the Choir of the English Concert was held on Monday 13 January 2014 as part of the Valletta International Baroque Festival 2014.
- A concert with Sacred Music by Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, organised by Terramundi, was held on Monday 17 February 2014. This concert was under the direction of Mro. Prof. Dion Buhagiar with the participation of the *Collegium Musicum Choir*.
- *Collegium Musicum Choir* under the direction of Mro. Prof. Dion Buhagiar held the annual Easter Concert on Thursday 10 April 2014.
- The New Choral Singers Choir under the musical direction of Robert Calleja performed a concert to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the choir. The concert was held on Wednesday, 11 June 2014.
- The Malta Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Mro. Prof. Michael Laus and with the participation of The Goldberg Ensemble and Mezzo-Soprano Claire Massa held a concert of Sacred Music under the distinguished patronage of the Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta. Works by Vivaldi, Handel, Zerafa, Mozart and others were performed. The concert, held on Wednesday, 2 July 2014, was organised by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to raise funds for charity.







## 6. DISTINGUISHED VISITORS AT ST JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL

- Prof. Claudio Ricci, Mayor of Assisi  
26 August 2013
- H.E. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana  
12 September 2013
- H.G. The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby  
1 October 2013
- Mr Du Qinglin, Vice Chairman Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, (CPPCC)  
24 October 2013
- H.R.H. Kubrat, Prince of Panagyurishte, Prince of Bulgaria, Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Duke of Saxony and his spouse *Doña* Carla Maria  
1 November 2013
- Mrs Gianna Fregonara, Spouse of Italian Prime Minister  
11 November 2013
- H.E. Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi  
23 November 2013
- The Hon. Alexei Meshkov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation  
20 December 2013
- H.E. Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission and European Commissioner of Interinstitutional Relations and Administration  
30 January 2014
- H.E. Karolos Papoulias, President of Hellenic Republic (Greece)  
14 February 2014
- H.E. Fabian Picardo, Chief Minister of Gibraltar  
8 April 2014
- H.E. Natalia Gherman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova  
11 April 2014
- Mr Taleb D. Rifai, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organisation – UNWTO  
12 April 2014
- Dott. Stefano De Caro, Director General of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property – ICCROM  
16 April 2014





- H.E. Whang Chao, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China  
7 May 2014
- H.E. Pasquale Valentini, Minister of Foreign Affairs and H.E. Giuseppe Maria Morganti, Minister of Education of San Marino  
20 July 2014















**The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation**  
St John's Co-Cathedral  
St John Street  
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