

ANNUAL REPORT

1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018



The
St John's
Co-Cathedral
Foundation



The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation
COUNCIL MEMBERS 2017-2018
(starting from the left)

Mgr Louis Camilleri

Dr Raymond Bondin

Mgr Victor Zammit McKeon

Mr Wilfrid Buttigieg, President

Dr Philip Farrugia Randon

Mgr Joseph Bugeja



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A PROMISING FUTURE

The President's Note



The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation can be described as a 'sui generis' organisation, bringing the Maltese Church and Government together via a joint and equal administrative arrangement. The Foundation model selected in 2001 can be deemed a success story based on the results achieved over the last seventeen years. As a Council member I had the opportunity to evaluate the works of my predecessors, leading to an understanding that the Maltese and international community will be indebted for posterity to the forefathers of the Foundation.

This Presidency has aimed to lead St John's to achieve better employment conditions for our employees, higher standards of customer care, improvements to the structural sustainability of the organisation, the opening up of further gateways for academic research & development, new bridges of collaboration with relevant entities and last but not least, ensuring that the organisation becomes more relevant and responsive to the signs of the times.

One of the first priorities was to lead the Foundation to become a role model employer. A consultation and listening exercise, coupled with a professional assessment of the administrative structure was held in preparation for the envisaged organisational growth. The newly selected system empowers those employees who aim to excel and advance in their position based on their performance, continuous training and merit. This system is based upon the fulfilment of clearly established curricula and key performance indicators organised by a newly recruited human resources manager. This Presidency has also encouraged our employees to proceed with the selection of a Union of choice, based on the understanding that a Union should be a partner with the employer in the development of sound practices, performance standards and fair conditions of employment.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the University of Malta in order to transform St John's into a research hub for academics and students. This Presidency has understood that the resources, specialisations and expertise available at University are far-reaching, hence this has sustained our belief in cultivating such a collaborative potential. This new initiative will serve to attract diverse academics to be able to conduct research and provide a new stream of knowledge and scientific insight about St John's. The Foundation is also planning to increase the number of delivered lectures via a wider array of experts and academics, each providing an insight onto St John's according to their area of specialisation. This new beginning was further sustained by the statutory duty to publish and empower researchers and academics as listed in the original deed of the Foundation.





The improvement of our visitor's experience was also given priority via the opening of new areas which were previously inaccessible such as the balcony which provides a spectacular bird's eye view of the Co-Cathedral. This new vantage point is also linked to studies, which are being carried out, in order to allow for the removal of the current opaque protective carpets. Albeit serving a protective scope the current carpets cover the visibility of a large number of tombstones, hence running counter to the communicative scope of the Knights who commissioned them. Of course, such interventions are delicate and painstaking; therefore the Foundation will be leaving no stone unturned to ensure that the project will be implemented properly from a practical, scientific and conservation point of view. Also in line with the aim to improve our visitor's experience, we are looking into the recreation of a Christmas crib as part of a yearlong strategy, which provides seasonal 'themes' for visitors according to the religious calendar.

This Presidency has also prioritised the need to be in touch with the fast changing developments that take place in society in terms of communications, technology and digitisation in order to remain not only relevant, but preferably a step ahead of time. The Foundation has issued a fresh call for new hands free video guides inclusive of tailor-made programmes for more specific audiences. The official website has also been revamped together with a comprehensive presence on various social media platforms. Another target was that the Maltese population at large learns about and appreciates the beauty of this world heritage site, via an increase in open days and other educational means of communication. These progressive changes have been sustained by the recruitment of two separate marketing and event managers who are responsible for the execution of a digital media, events and public relations strategy approved by Council.

A process of dialogue with potential partners and local entities such as Heritage Malta, the Institute for Tourism Studies, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, the Education Division, the Manoel Theatre and the Malta Association of Professional Conservator-Restorers has also been heralded. When one serves in the field of culture and heritage, the very nature of the sector should place a person within the lengthier context of time, hence leading to a realisation that the national treasures we are entrusted with are not there to become a personalised possession. The latter is an essential requisite of sound custodianship and leadership, which achieves an appropriate balance between preservation, conservation and accessibility to the national patrimony to the widest audience and number of organisational partners possible.

Undoubtedly the next key project for the Foundation is the new museum project, which will provide one singular and wider hall to house the largest collection of Flemish tapestries worldwide. The tapestries will finally be presented in sequence and witnessed from an adequate viewing distance, considerably enhancing visitor's experience, inclusive of an appropriate conservation climate. Opening times will also be increased for dedicated areas hence improving accessibility to the Museum during weekends. The tapestry hall will also be an auditorium with dedicated equipment, instantly transforming the viewing gallery into a 360-degree educational space surrounded by artistic and ecclesiastical splendour. Currently we are also working on developing 'avant-garde' 7D immersive technology for a specific area of the Caravaggio Centre, which if implemented would be a leading project on a European level. There is also room for a professional in-house restoration laboratory, a dedicated educational space for primary and secondary school children and a research library – all subject to space availability. What is fundamental from an administrative point of view is that these strategic decisions are taken in a pro-active manner rather than re-actively at a later stage.





As a Council we also need to have the humility and courage to remain open to further improvements to the current version of the Museum project based on further consultation with experts and the recruitment of specialists in various fields as a 'constant'.

The scope behind this approach is to ensure that the museum project is completed in a manner, which leaves no stone unturned to the best of our abilities as a Council.

The above understanding is based on the view that when our thinking has become all about yesterday or sustained by the belief that one has achieved completion, then we would be called to allow space for someone new, with a fresher, more relevant and forward looking vision. The following are just a few pointers of areas, which the Foundation can possibly work upon in the years ahead:

Ample restoration and conservation works have been carried out at St John's but this process is not yet complete, one example is the Mattia Preti ceiling which from an aesthetic point of view lacks lustre and vivacity. Internal climate control needs to be placed high on the agenda to avoid having a severe contrast in temperatures between the new museum project and the Co-Cathedral without being of detriment to the conservation of the paintings, monuments and artefacts. Green energy solutions also need to be given priority for the museum project and beyond in order to ensure that St John's contributes to the well-being of future generations via an increased environmental conscientiousness. St John's also has the potential to cater for events of an international calibre inclusive of Easter and Christmas Concerts possibly aired on TV and on social media channels via the appointment of an artistic director who maps the route and attracts the appropriate artists and events to St John's. We do also have room for improvement in our listening skills as an organisation via an increase in feedback channels for our visitors, employees and external stakeholders alike.

Apart from being Malta's leading and most visited tourist location St John's Co-Cathedral is a priceless gem with endless potential. It is one of those rare sites, which paradoxically keeps revealing itself, without physically changing. No matter how many times one visits, the eyes capture something new, a new detail, a new symbol, a new shade, a new colour, hence providing a continual sense of unfolding beauty. May those who have already visited St John's revisit, in order to witness the progress, which has been achieved over the years, whilst first time visitors keep experiencing the magnificence of the home of the Knights.



WILFRID BUTTIGIEG

President, The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation
2017 - 2018

NOTE

Mr Wilfrid Buttigieg has been serving as a Councillor and Government representative since July 2013. He has served as President of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation between July 2017 and July 2018. Mr Buttigieg possesses a religious background following six years of formation as a Jesuit pre-novice. He is also a graduated and warranted Educator, possesses a Bachelor of Laws and Legal Procurator and is currently reading a Master of Advocacy at the University of Malta.



RE-STRUCTURING THE FOUNDATION

A note from the new Secretary of The Council



The role of the Secretary of the Council is to ensure that the statutory obligations of the Foundation are adhered to while assisting the Council to keep its strategy on track. In this regard the secretary liaises with the President of the Council regularly to set priorities for the meetings of the Council while assisting the President in executing any business that he deems necessary from time to time.

On the other hand the secretary liaises with the Chief Executive Officer regarding the operational matters that she wishes to bring to the attention of the Council, as well as, allocating time to report about the progress of the projects being managed by the executive.

During 2018 the Foundation saw most of the decisions taken in 2017 in connection with the re-structuring of the Foundation come to fruition. Following the Council's approval of the re-structuring plan in late 2017, the CEO was charged with implementing the plan which included a new salary structure for the whole organisation and the creation of new positions to strengthen the management team in preparation for the expansion of business anticipated in the near future with the advent of the new Museum and the Caravaggio Centre.

In this regard the Council has its sight firmly set on the future and its vision to make St John's Co-Cathedral accessible to all Maltese young and old, as well as, to the visitors who share with us the privilege of enjoying its splendour.


JOE GERADA
Council Secretary



The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation ADMINISTRATION TEAM

(starting from the left)

Front row

Stephen Deguara

PR Sales & Marketing Manager

Cynthia de Giorgio

CEO/Curator

Back row

Mark Muscat

Event Coordinator

Ian Camilleri

Operations Manager

Valentina Saliba

Administrative Executive

Adriana Alescio

In-House Conservator / Restorer

Anthony Casha

General Administration Officer

Marie Bartolo

Head Custodian

Kevin Attard

Human Resources Manager

ST JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL

An Introduction

The Order of the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta built this church as their Conventual Church and dedicated it to St John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Order. When the construction was completed in 1577 it stood as a formidable and rather austere reflection of the Knights' recent past siege. But gradually, over the years, St John's Church had been transformed into an outstanding treasure house, since 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 numerous artefacts, by artists including the renowned Caravaggio and Mattia Preti, which embellish the Co-Cathedral, are the artistic and religious heritage of hundreds of years of glorious history that is simultaneously 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 an active sanctuary and holy place of veneration and hosts the most important church celebrations and state events.

St John's Co-Cathedral's architecture is of a basic mannerist form. The interior, which consists of a wide nave with a barrel vault and two aisles divided into side chapels, was originally just as simple as the exterior. However, in the seventeenth century, Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner ordered the complete redecoration of the interior. The dawn of the seventeenth century saw the formation of a new style that was both exuberant and demonstrative in character and provided ample decorative material. The contrast between the simple architecture of the external façade and the colourful rich interior is a major characteristic that makes St John's such a unique monument.

Mattia Preti, an Italian artist, was commissioned with the embellishment of the vault, where he painted episodes from the life of St John the Baptist. Preti was one of the leading artists of the seventeenth century. His pristine draughtsmanship and skilful use of colour transformed the interior into a celebration of baroque art. Preti produced a masterpiece of dramatic scenes and illusionistic architectural effects. During the seventeenth century, the plain walls of the nave and the chapels were carved and gilded with a variety of motifs from foliage and flowers to angels and many other symbols.

St John's Co-Cathedral houses one of the most exceptional marble inlaid floors in the world. The floor contains tombstones that commemorate high-ranking members, with carved inscriptions that describe the acts of chivalry and religious ardour of individual knights. The extensive use of symbols and heraldic devices is a unique feature of the floor tombstones.





The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation was established in 2001 by the Government and the Catholic Church in Malta. The Foundation is administered by a Council consisting of six members: three are appointed by the Government of Malta and three by the Archbishop of Malta. The main aims of the Foundation are the conservation and restoration of the priceless works of art and artefacts preserved within the Co-Cathedral and its museum. The Foundation is responsible for the administration of St John's Co-Cathedral as a religious and cultural monument. The income generated throughout the year funds the maintenance and restoration projects, with the aim of preserving this Maltese jewel in the best possible condition to enhance the knowledge and admiration of present as well as future generations.

Over the last fifteen years, under the administration of the Foundation, St John's Co-Cathedral has undergone an extensive programme which has restored the interior to its former condition, transforming it into the glowing jewel it was during the reign of the Grand Masters of the Order of the Knights of St John. The planning and design of the extension and refurbishment of the museum was the major project undertaken during the year. St John's Co-Cathedral is one of Europe's unique churches and for this reason was listed, together with the entire city in which it stands, as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1980.

This year's report gives an extensive review of the works and project carried out during the presidency of Mr Wilfrid Buttigieg and directed by Cynthia de Giorgio, the Chief Executive Officer. The report covers the holistic plan implemented to restore and conserve the works of art and artefacts in St John's Co-Cathedral and its museum. The following report illustrates the projects and management activity carried out by the Foundation.



CYNTHIA DE GIORGIO
CEO/Curator



I. CONSERVATION PROJECTS

I.1 The Extension and Refurbishment of the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum

In 2016 the Foundation embarked on a major project to extend and refurbish the Co-Cathedral's museum. The objective of this project will be to extend and modernise the museum to exhibit most of the works of art and other artefacts in a fully accessible manner according to the importance, relevance and value of each artefact. The refurbishment will consist of exhibiting artefacts in appropriate conservation conditions and in the correct sequence. The extension will consist of creating adequate space and distance for visitors to view and appreciate the objets d'art according to the scale and materials of the artefacts. The main objective of the museum will be to highlight the most important collections and artistic contributions.

The extension and refurbishment will consist of *The Caravaggio Wing* that will focus on expanding the awareness of the renowned artist. The Caravaggio Wing will be equipped with the latest technologies to support a didactic approach to the artist. A chamber will be constructed to display the set of tapestries, most of which are based on designs prepared by the artist Peter Paul Rubens. The large dimensions of the tapestries require adequate space to be appreciated. The chamber will be equipped with didactic methods to assist awareness of the artistic importance of the tapestries. The collection of illuminated choral manuscripts and the collection of sacred vestments will be exhibited in the adjacent Carapечchia Loggia. The Cappella Ardente, which is a unique funerary wooden structure, will also be exhibited. The silver collection that is currently in the reserved collection will be housed in the Bartolott Crypt. All the artefacts exhibited will be maintained in the correct climatic conditions to ensure their long-term conservation.

A visitors' centre will be installed at the new entrance to the museum on Merchant Street, with adequate space to facilitate comfortable entry for both group visits and individuals. The first part of the project consisted of a soft-strip procedure during which the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum was closed, and all the artefacts were dismantled and placed in the reserve collection. The sacristy was restored and prepared to receive the paintings which hung in the painting gallery in the Carapечchia Wing, as the latter area was to become part of the new museum site. The paintings were then carefully moved from the Carapечchia Wing and hung in the newly restored sacristy, where they are now enjoyed by the Cathedral's visitors.





1.1.1 The Caravaggio Wing

The refurbishment of the Caravaggio Wing was well under way throughout this year, with the ground floor that will house the painting depicting St Jerome Writing nearing completion. Hoarding was procured and installed this year.

The space for the display of the painting of St Jerome Writing is called The St Jerome Room. This space was designed so as to captivate the audience with its immediacy of vision. Appropriate lighting and climate control were also procured during this year. The Caravaggio Wing will give visitors the opportunity to look and learn, assisted by user friendly visual aids. It will also allow visitors to spend additional time discovering more about the artist and his masterpiece. During the peak season, it will allow for flexible museum opening hours. The space will offer a planned visitor experience where those interested will be able to find all the art history and religious information they may require. The information will be enhanced with interactive features and other modern media provided by the latest technology available. The Department of Digital Arts within the Faculty of Media & Knowledge Sciences at the University of Malta has been engaged to provide a heritage interpretation space.

The Caravaggio Wing is being part financed by EU Funds under Priority Axis PA 5 Protecting our environment, with the aim of investing in natural and cultural assets for the Caravaggio Wing & Basement Museum Spaces within the extension and refurbishment project of the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum. The Caravaggio Wing is forecast to be completed by the end of 2019.





1.2 Restoration of The Triumph of the Eucharist Tapestries

The project to restore the tapestries at St John's Co-Cathedral has reached the final stage. This is a project that commenced in 2006 on the initiative of The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation. This year five tapestries have been restored by the Royal Manufacturers De Wit Laboratories in Belgium. Five tapestries depicting the Apostles (St John, St Jude Thaddeus, St Matthew, St Thomas and St James the Great) that had been sent to Belgium in 2016 for restoration returned in February 2018. Four tapestries depicting St Andrew, St Bartholomew, St Phillip and St James the Less were sent to Belgium for restoration in March 2018.

The set consists of twenty-nine pieces and is the largest collection of tapestries woven during the Baroque Age. Fourteen large tapestries measure approximately just short of seven metres in width and depict scenes from the life of Christ and allegories portraying the Triumph of the Eucharist. Another fourteen smaller panels represent the Virgin Mary, Christ the Saviour and the Apostles. One tapestry portrays the benefactor, Grand Master Perellos, who had donated the set to St John's in 1702. The tapestries were woven in pure silk and wool and, since textiles are susceptible to deterioration from handling and being exposed to UV light, with the passage of time their restoration has become necessary to preserve them. The methodology of the restoration process consisted 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 were removed; loose parts and threads were consolidated, and open seams repaired. The tapestry is then fitted with a new supportive lining to prevent deterioration.

The tapestries had originally been woven in Brussels by the tapestry merchant and weaver Judocus de Vos in the late seventeenth century. The set was commissioned by Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful who had just been elected Grand Master and wished to furnish the Knights' Conventual Church of St John in Valletta with a series of tapestries to be hung on specific feasts. The set of tapestries depicts the Triumph of the Eucharist. The larger tapestries of the set were woven on cartoons based on creations by the renowned Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens.





1.3 Restoration of Main Façade and Bell Towers

One of the major projects at St John's Co-Cathedral has been the restoration of the main façade and the belfries. The restoration works started in 2016 and were completed in January 2018. The architectural firm TBA periti had conducted a condition assessment survey of the exterior architectural fabric to establish a conservation strategy and programme that included graphical documentation of the masonry. A detailed photographic record of the areas in their current state, along with mapping of the areas of deterioration, was also conducted. Surfaces that had been rendered or plastered were also identified to create an illustrated description of the parts that required intervention. The report also included a description of the types of deterioration based on detailed visual examinations carried out on site, including an appraisal of all elements to be restored or replaced.

Each block of stone was checked for any damages, cleaned and repaired. Retaining the original stone was a key element for all interventions required, although slabs that were in an advanced stage of deterioration were replaced. Part of this restoration process was the removal of encrustation and stains caused by rain water and other atmospheric condition changes. Another intervention was to divert the flow of rain water away from streaming down the middle part of the main façade.

To prevent pigeons and other birds from nesting and fouling the sculptural parts, new transparent spikes were installed. Transparent nets were also affixed in front of small windows and other small openings. Restoration work was also carried out on the wooden apertures of the towers and the wooden beams of the bells in the belfry. These were carefully restored to their original state and repainted.

The restoration project was co-financed by the Foundation and the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government. The work was directed by the curator Ms Cynthia de Giorgio and carried out by a team of restorers from the Restoration Directorate, under the direction of Arch. Norbert Gatt and Arch. Jean Frendo. A press conference was held on 15 January 2018 to inaugurate the completion of the restoration of the façade and bell tower.



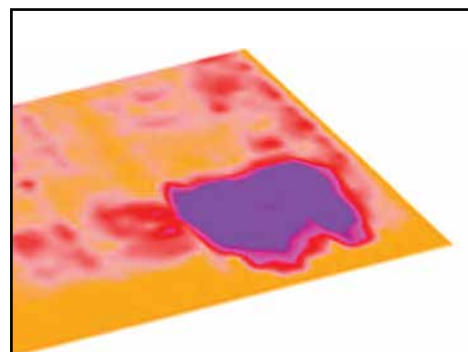


I.4 The Ground Penetrating Radar Project

In March 2017 a non-invasive geophysical survey campaign started at St John's Co-Cathedral to investigate the entire floor of the nave and the side chapels. This type of technology can offer a range of opportunities to assist the conservation strategy for the historical floor of the church. The Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey was performed with the aim of identifying and mapping possible burial sites and cavities whilst furnishing useful information about the structures beneath the floor. This exercise was also conducted in the Grand Masters' Crypt.

The GPR uses high-frequency radio waves. The transmitter emits electromagnetic energy into the ground at specific depth, and when the energy encounters a buried object or a boundary between different materials it can be reflected or refracted back to the surface. The variation of the return signal can then be recorded by a receiving antenna. During the campaign, the GPR was guided across the floor along a grid pattern, emitting a scanning depth of 80 centimetres. The data for each chapel and nave was collected and processed. Horizontal depth cross sections were also made and studied in comparison with vertical scans in order to identify the main anomalies. In this case the data had been gathered by using a Ris Hi system and a prototypal reconfigurable stepped frequency system, implemented by the Institute for Archaeological and Monumental Heritage IBAM-CNR.

The analysis has provided confirmation of some hypotheses already formulated but never materially tested, together with different information about the distribution, size and depth of the burial sites beneath the marble slabs. All the chapels and the nave have been reconstructed in 3D showing the localised anomalies that could be interpreted as tombs. The project was carried out by the Department of Geosciences of the University of Malta under the direction of the Curator of St John's Co-Cathedral Cynthia de Giorgio and the in-house Conservator Adriana Alescio.





1.5 Environmental Control Equipment for the Grandmasters' Crypt

The Grand Masters' Crypt represents a highly important feature of Malta's historical and cultural heritage. It was excavated during the Co-Cathedral's construction in 1577 and is situated beneath the choir and the altar areas. It consists of a rough square in plan with two arched recesses in each of the north and south walls, a polygonal sanctuary with a large window at street level, and a western apsidal area. The Crypt contains monuments dedicated to the first twelve Grand Masters of Malta, either freestanding sarcophagi, or set into the walls, as well as marble tombstones set into the floor. The frescos that decorate approximately 160 square metres of the surface are attributed to the Italian artist Niccoló Nasoni, and date from 1723-1725.

Another primary on-going project at St John's Co-Cathedral has been the installation of a permanent environmental control system for the Grand Masters' Crypt. The project commenced after the restoration was completed in 2012. A scientific study was carried out by the Courtauld Institute that focused on the relation between the microclimate condition of the Crypt and the conservation of its delicate frescos and monuments. The study was followed by the analysis of the deterioration phenomena that have caused the decohesion of the stone monuments and salts efflorescence on the painted surfaces. The result showed that only active preventive conservation, together with periodic maintenance, could slow down the deterioration process.

Fluctuations of temperature and relative humidity are the main causes of damage to the Crypt. Considering the delicate nature and the importance of the subterranean chamber, the Foundation proposed to install a sophisticated automated environmental control system as the best and unique solution to keep the inner microclimate in a stable and suitable condition for the constituent materials of the artefacts.

During the course of this year the environmental control system has been procured and installed. The environmental control system has been specifically designed to control the ambient conditions inside the Grand Master's Crypt in accordance with predetermined design parameters.

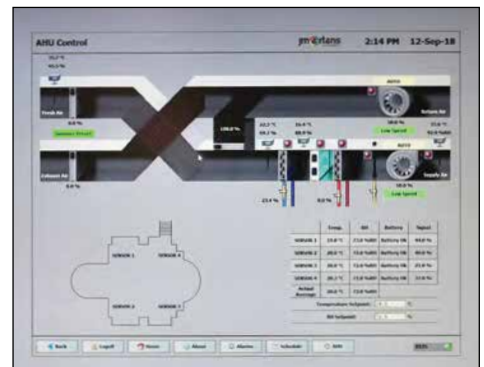




Essentially the system included an air handling unit (AHU) which was installed in an existing room located at roof level at St John's Co-Cathedral. The AHU consisted of various sections as required. Supply and return air will be transferred through phenolic ducting down to the Grand Master's crypt located beneath the main altar of the church. The system includes an external inverter-driven heat pump to provide both temperature and humidity control in conjunction with a humidifier. All the parts of the environmental control plant were custom built to reach the environmental conditions which correspond with the performance requirements to reach an optimum conservation level within the Crypt.

The accessible route was from four oculi located in the Crypt's vaulted roof which once emerged into the floor of the main altar. These oculi had been blocked off when the presbytery area was elevated and enlarged. The proposed ducting route has been studied thoroughly to ensure minimum interventions to the existing masonry fabric. The result of the study showed that the oculi were the only possible pathway for the ducting. The process consisted of the preparation of a passage for the inflow and outflow of the air ducts from the roof down to the crypt. Once the required ducts reached floor level a passage was made through the masonry wall for the ducts to emerge beneath the choir stalls. For the ducts to reach the oculi a number of rows of the existing marble tiles were mapped and numbered and removed with precision. Once the ducting was laid the marble tiles were replaced in their original position.

The works concerned were all carried out by experts in the field of restoration and under constant supervision. These delicate masonry and marble works were carried out by the Foundation's masons and restorers. The intervention was kept to a minimum, with as low an impact as possible, especially considering the benefit of the proposed system for the Grand Masters' Crypt. As a result of these works, it is now equipped with a state-of-the-art environmental control system which will minimise the deterioration within the Crypt to ensure its preservation for further study by future generations.





2. RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE WORKS

2.1 Restoration of the Tombstones

The floor of the Co-Cathedral consists of around four hundred inlaid marble tombstones dating from the early seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The tombstones are the resting place of some of the most illustrious Knights of the Order. The majority of the designs for the marble tombstones were made by renowned artists, 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 polychrome marble slab, inlaid with symbols of death and military trophies. The engraved Latin epitaphs, illustrate the life of the deceased and his achievements.

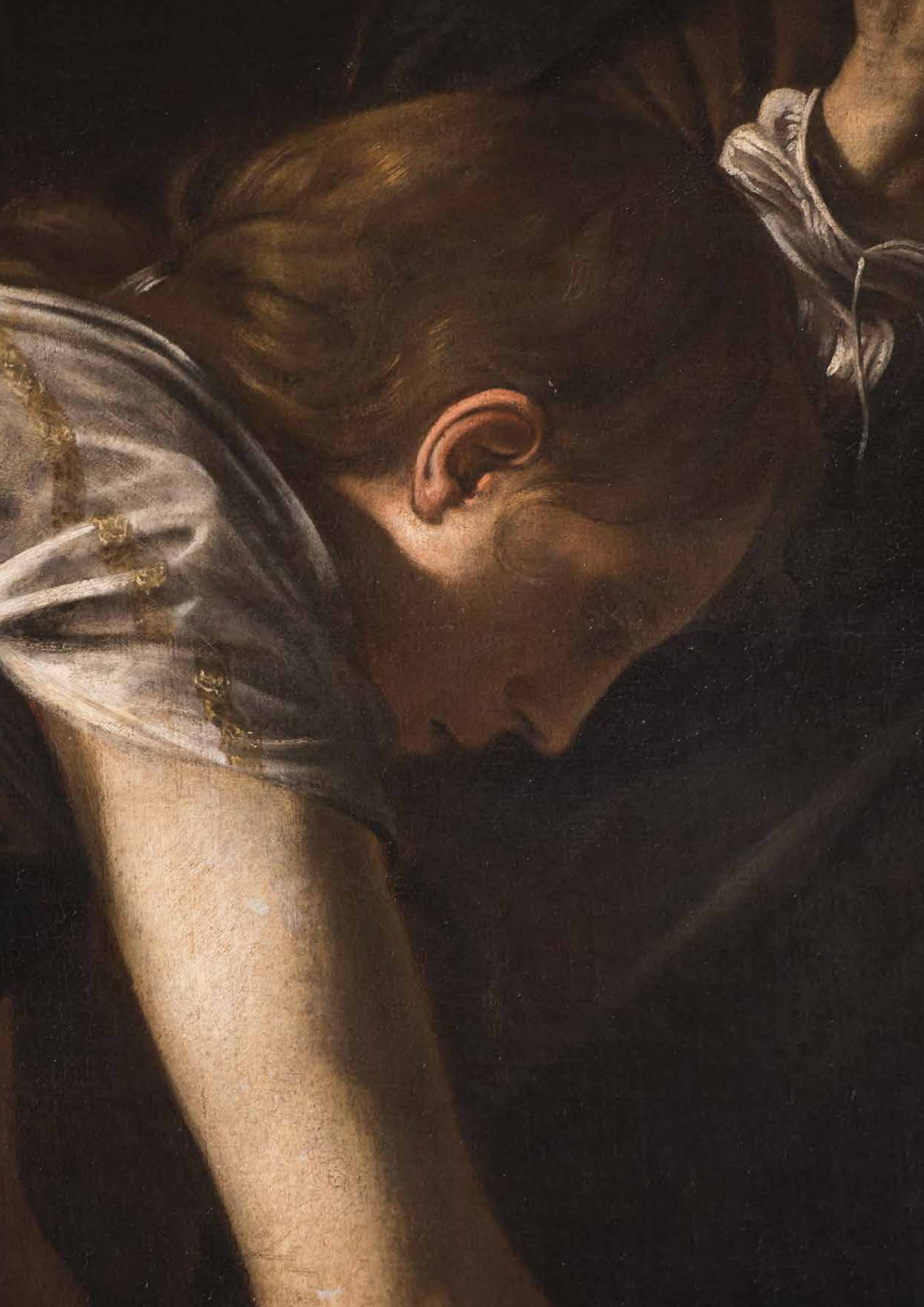
Though marble is a durable material, it suffers from damage caused by abrasion. The inlaid designs and motifs made of thin marble on the tombstones are also susceptible to cracking due to the passage of time as well as weight, leading to losses in the inlaid marble layer. The restoration of the inlaid marble tombstones is executed according to a priority conservation management plan.

The 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 of the 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.

During this year, restoration was carried out on twenty-seven tombstones. Amongst these were the tombstones of Louis Roger de Blecourt Tincourt, Ludovico Bacci in the Nave, and Franz Sebastian von Wratista in the Chapel of Germany. The aim was to restore the losses that occurred over time. Past restoration interventions were removed. All the tombstones in the main nave were examined and each tombstone that had sustained losses was cleaned up and replacement was carried out with new marble parts of the same type and colour.

The losses caused by the abrasion of footfall on the surface were filled using suitable materials to render the incisions visible and enhance the aesthetic quality of the design. The restoration of the tombstones was carried out by the marble restorer, Jesmond Bartolo, under the direction of Adriana Alescio, the Foundation's conservator.





2.2 Restoration of the Altar in the Oratory

The Altar of the Oratory dedicated to St John the Baptist is a free-standing structure resting in the middle of the presbytery. This area is elevated from the floor by one step and is delimited by an inlaid marble balustrade.

The altar consists of a rectangular altar table on a pedestal placed on a wide two-stepped structure. There is a tabernacle on the mensa with a silver door embossed with a representation of the Resurrection of Christ and a gilded bronze roundel medallion on the front bearing a relief of the Beheading of St John the Baptist. The mensa is made in *marmo africano* whilst the frontal panelling is in *verde* and *giallo antico*. The altar gradine is supported by a pedestal base in *marmo africano* that carries an inlaid marble coat of arms of Grand Master Gregorio Carafa on each dado. The back gradine rises high and is in *verde antico* with a front panel in beautiful red alabaster.

The altar was examined and found to be in a structurally good condition. The conservation treatments focused on reviving the aesthetic qualities of the monument, removing the thick layers of dust and grime accumulated over the years, especially on the horizontal surfaces and on the white marble. Tests were carried out to identify the most appropriate cleaning methods for removal of the aged wax applied to the marble surfaces during previous interventions and other deposits, whilst the tabernacle and the medallion on the front were simply dusted.

Subsequently, the marble was treated with new wax to protect the surface from abrasion and polished to revive the natural brilliance of the marble. These operations were carried out by the Foundation's resident marble restorer, Raymond Aquilina, under the supervision of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.3 Restoration of the Painting - The Coronation of the Virgin

The Assumption and the Coronation of the Virgin Mary is one of the largest paintings belonging to the church, measuring 3.10 x 3.80 metres. This oil on canvas painting dates to the late sixteenth century.

The pre-restoration condition of the painting, consisted of extensive detachments and losses of the paint layer. The detached areas had been faced with Japanese paper to prevent further paint losses until conservation works could be carried out. The thick layer of tarnished varnish and the alteration of the extensive over-painting had obscured the original chromatic tonality.

The majority of the restoration work was focused on the removal of the additional past interventions to uncover the painter's original palette. Due to infra-red and UV light investigation, it was possible to verify the pictorial composition, distinguishing clearly the over-painting from the original paintwork. The original materials and the artist's technique were studied as part of the diagnostic investigations.

Several tests were carried out in order to find the right methodology for cleaning and for the removal of oxidized varnish. First, the surface was stabilised with localised application of a specific adhesive, where the paint layers were detached and lifted, and subsequently with a consolidation of the entire surface previously applied with Japanese paper.

The rear side of the canvas was also treated since strip-lining from a previous intervention was found laid on top of a relining procedure. Both were removed, and the original canvas was cleaned and consolidated. The strainer was replaced with a new custom-made strainer having an expandable system. The canvas was attached to the strainer and stretched from each side.

The lacunae in the paint surface were repaired and retouched with varnish colours. Considering the extensive area of paint loss retouching was carried out using the pointillism technique to distinguish the retouching intervention from the original pigments. As a final touch, the painting was varnished to saturate the colours and protect the surface from light oxidation.

The conservation-restoration project, completed in April 2018, was carried out by Sac. Charles Vella under the direction of the Foundation's curator Cynthia de Giorgio and the supervision of the conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.4 Restoration of the Painting - The Virgin & Child

The painting depicting the Virgin Mary and child is attributed to Francesco Zahra, a prolific Maltese artist of the eighteenth century.

The painting measures 77 x 98 centimetres with a gilded wooden frame. The aim of the restoration of this painting was to clean the surface from the tarnished varnish and remove past retouching interventions that had discoloured over time.

The painting was first studied with diffused and raking light to observe the surface morphology and document the state of conservation. The painting had been relined and a counter-frame placed to cover the new canvas and nails. The strength of the canvas and the wooden frame were found in good condition and to minimise the intervention they were not replaced. The gilded frame was removed and treated separately.

Cleaning tests were carried out after the initial stages of restoration. The acidity of the old varnish required a solvent gel with alkaline pH balance. The gel was applied on Japanese paper and left in place for a few minutes, after which the surface was rinsed with a neutral solution. This method made it possible to remove the yellowish varnish and past retouchings without compromising the original colours.

After cleaning, the tear on the bottom half of the canvas was repaired by applying a synthetic adhesive using a heat spatula. The adhesive film was cut in the shape of the detached canvas and applied between the relining support and the original canvas. The adhesive was activated by a heat spatula, bonding the two canvases together.

A layer of retouching varnish was applied to saturate the colour for the infilling process. The lacunae were filled in with Bologna chalk mixed with rabbit skin glue, levelled with scalpel and sand paper.

Missing parts were retouched with watercolours and glazed with coloured varnish. The losses in the hands was retouched using the *tratteggio* technique. The surface was treated with a final varnish applied twice.

The strainer was cleaned and consolidated whilst the small missing parts were filled with Bologna chalk mixed with rabbit skin glue and retouched with watercolours. The decorative frame was dusted and cleaned to remove wax drops and dirt deposits. Missing parts were replaced, and losses were re-gilded with gold leaf. The restoration procedure was carried out by Ms Adriana Alescio, conservator at St John's Co-Cathedral.





2.5 Restoration of the Painting - St Gaetan

The oil on canvas painting representing San Gaetan was chosen as the main artefact to be studied and restored during the traineeship of a graduate student who was taking a master's course in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage. The two-month traineeship was an agreement between the Foundation and the University of Urbino Carlo Bo and focused mainly on the photographic documentation, cleaning operations and support treatments. The challenge of this project was to find the best methodology of intervention, preserving the constituent materials and the historical vicissitude of the painting. The painting dates back to the nineteenth century. The first procedure was to examine and photograph it under diffused and raking light from both sides. The decorative frame was detached and treated separately.

The painting was then dusted and several tests were carried out to find the best methodology for removal of the residues of the old varnish, overpainting and other deposits. The cleaning was carried out using a solvent gel applied with Japanese paper, with attention to the details and the most delicate areas.

The relining canvas dating back to the seventeenth century was easily removed because it was completely detached from the original one. The canvas was then cleaned of glue residues and stabilised. In order to keep the dimensions of the painting as it was found, new canvas inlays were attached to the edges of the canvas, using a synthetic resin and heated spatula. The canvas showed a large plain pattern weave typical of the seventeenth century and was very fragile. For this reason a new relining canvas was applied on the back, using a synthetic canvas with a narrower weave.

The aim of the relining canvas was to reinforce the support and, in this case, it allowed the painting to be better stretched on its strainer. The relining canvas was attached to the original one by using a synthetic adhesive in film which avoided the adhesive to penetrate through the canvas and stain the paint layer.

In order to re-use the current wooden strainer, even if it was not the original one, the joints between the bars were modified and an expandable system was introduced to tighten the canvas on the frame. The surface was treated with a coat of retouching varnish and the lacunae were filled in order to prepare the surface for the next retouching. These operations were carried out under the direction of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.6 Restoration of the Antiporta

The inner door of the main entrance of St John's Co-Cathedral, called the *antiporta*, was installed in 1950 to create a sort of lobby between the main door and the nave. It is a large roofed structure made in solid mahogany wood, with two side doors and a large central portal in line with the external portal. The surface is moulded and painted in a dark brown colour. Over the years, the external surface has suffered from discoloration due to sun exposure and the progressive thinning of the varnish. The aim of the restoration was to revive the aesthetic quality of the wood and protect the external surface from light oxidation and UV radiation.

The surface was cleaned of the residues of old varnish from both sides using sand paper and solvents where necessary. The cleaning allowed the natural colour of the wood, which is much lighter and more shaded, to be appreciated. The Foundation decided to consolidate and stabilise the wood without applying any colours so as not to alter the original tonality of the wood.

The surface was treated against woodworm and consolidated, whilst holes and scratches were filled in using powdered wood mixed with glue and pigments. The fractures in the ceiling and in the vertical panels were integrated with pieces of similar wood attached to the surface by vinylic glue and retouched. The surface was revived by applying a clear oil-based protective wood finish, as a first UV protection and a coat of microcrystalline wax in order to protect both internal and external surfaces against light oxidation, scratches and abrasions. The metal lockers and hinges were cleaned and burnished.

The restoration works were carried out by Brands International Ltd. under the supervision of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.7 Restoration of the Marble Pilasters

The giant pilasters in the main nave were encased in green marble in the seventeenth century following the Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner's proposal. Each pilaster was covered with slabs of marble of different sizes, starting from the dado reaching up to the cornice decorated in gold leaf.

The bas-relief of the coat of arms of Grand Master Cotoner is placed on the top central part of each pilaster. It is realised in polychrome carved marble as is the eight-pointed cross that is found in the lower part.

The pilasters were found to be in a structurally good condition. The slabs of *verde antico* marble are generally in a good state of conservation despite the surface of some of them suffering from discolouration and pitting. These phenomena are concentrated on the lower parts of the pilasters on the south side, due to the rising damp mostly present on that side. Missing parts were found on the decoration of the coat of arms due to the inlaid marble having become detached from the support.

The aim of the restoration was to remove the deposits of dust and dirt accumulated on the surface over the years, and to repair and integrate the decorative motifs of the coat of arms where the marble was missing. A light cleaning was carried out on the entire surface to remove residues of wax and other deposits, whilst the losses were integrated using the same type of marble as the original. Only the coat of arms and the eight-pointed cross were treated with a new layer of wax to protect the surface and maintain the natural brilliance of the marble.

The restoration treatments were completed in May 2018 and were carried out by the Foundation's resident marble restorer, Raymond Aquilina, under the supervision of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





3. OPERATIONAL PROJECTS

3.1 Audio Guide Service

A call for public tender was issued for the provision of a video guide service to enhance the current audio guide service. The tender was awarded to Exalta Ltd., who will provide the 'Orpheo Touch' video guide for all visitors in the Church. The new video guide will enrich the visiting experience by including the provision of a stereo headphone for a hands free visitor experience and better audio-quality with multi-touch display screens. The visitor may navigate through different stations, each having images with details from various artefacts which are not clearly visible to the naked eye. This service also aims to assist visual and/or hearing-impaired visitors during their visit.



3.2 Health & Safety

Health and safety programmes were implemented to foster a safe and healthy work environment.

The programmes were aimed towards the protection of co-workers, employers, customers, and many others who might be affected by the workplace environment. The activities of the programmes include regular consultancies and audits to ensure that an optimum health and safety environment was achieved. Courses were designed for the employees to keep them updated on the latest health and safety issues.

Training varied from first-aid courses to fire-fighting, provided to all staff. Apart from employees' training, the Health & Safety programme also covers all equipment, to ensure the highest standards of maintenance is kept. The equipment includes fire extinguishers, electrical appliances and machinery and a mechanical lifter.

Health and safety checks were carried out regularly throughout the Co-Cathedral, including the precincts. This year the Foundation invested in a new van, ensuring that, when, employees travel on the roads, they do so in a safe environment.

The Foundation encouraged all employees to participate in on-going training so that they continuously improve their knowledge of this subject.

During the course of this year, four employees attended an H&S course held by BICC; they completed the course successfully and obtained their skill card.





Site security is an important item on the Foundation's agenda. The scope is to ensure the safety of thousands of visitors hosted by the Co-Cathedral annually. In this regard, the Foundation has introduced new security site-systems which extend beyond the main areas and the outer perimeter alone - which are already covered by 24/7 CCTV cameras. Moreover, the Foundation introduced a security service with two security officers on duty to survey the area for better crowd management.

Our mission is to provide an environment where one can visit in a safe and secure manner.



4. PROGRAMMES & INITIATIVES

4.1 World Tourism Day

To commemorate this event on 27 September 2017, the Foundation handed out to all visitors a printed full colour postcard of “The Beheading of St John” by Caravaggio.

4.2 Notte Bianca

During Notte Bianca 2017 the Coro Cathedralis and Maestro Hamish Dustagheer participated with a sacred music repertoire of short songs in between the free guided tours provided in Maltese and English. Notte Bianca was held on Saturday 7 October and St John’s Co-Cathedral opened its doors for the public to visit for free from 19:00 until midnight. Once again, a leaflet was provided explaining the church and gave an insight into the Museum refurbishment and extension which was the highlight of 2017.

The in-house conservator Adriana Alescio was in the sacristy restoring a ‘Mother and Child’ painting attributed to Francesco Zahra (1710-1773) whilst one of the in-house marble restorers Raymond Aquilina was cleaning the sepulchral monument of Nicolas Cotoner in the Chapel of the Langue of Aragon. A total of 9,179 visitors entered St John’s Co-Cathedral during this event.

4.3 Lecture on the Tapestries: Triumph of the Eucharist

On Thursday 22 March at 18:30 hrs the Curator Cynthia de Giorgio gave a lecture on the Tapestries which were donated to St John’s Co-Cathedral by Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful. The Grand Master’s *gioia* or gift to the then Conventual Church of the Hospitaller Order of the Knights of St John consists of 29 large tapestries and is the largest set of tapestries in the world.

This public lecture revolved around how this set of tapestries was produced and explained various features in detail. The Spanish Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia had commissioned Peter Paul Rubens, the great Baroque artist, to produce models for a set of tapestries and the set given by Grand Master Perellos used these same *modelli*.

The lecture also focused on the fact that the subject “Triumph of the Eucharist” was very important at the time and it gave an original Catholic Reformation graphic narrative which was conceived by Peter Paul Rubens in consultation with the Infanta.





Around two hundred people attended this lecture which was delivered in English and held in the main nave. The lecture was publicised in the newspaper, on Facebook and Instagram.

4.4 Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Malta

A historic Memorandum of Understanding was finalised between the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation and the University of Malta (UOM) and was signed on the 9 May 2018 by Professor Alfred J. Vella, University of Malta Rector, and Wilfrid Buttigieg, President of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation. The occasion was also attended by the Hon. Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government who addressed the press and commended this collaboration which would utilise expertise and enhance the knowledge concerning St John's Co-Cathedral.



The Memorandum of Understanding will empower students and facilitate access to St John's for the faculties, departments and institutes within the University of Malta for research on conservation and restoration of this monument and the museum. Mr Michael Pace Ross, the Administrative Secretary of the Church in Malta, was also present for this Press Conference and spoke highly of the partnership between the State and the Church which is now also being extended towards the University of Malta.



The Press Conference was concluded by the President, Mr Buttigieg, who introduced Dr Sebastiano D'Amico from the University of Malta, who had recently conducted GPR testing of the tombstones. This had resulted in truly intriguing discoveries as to what lies underneath some of the tombstones at St John's Co-Cathedral. Conservator Adriana Alescio and the Curator Cynthia de Giorgio, together with Dr Sebastiano D'Amico, answered any queries put forward.

4.5 Exultet Concert

On Friday 27 July 2018, the Foundation of St John's Co-Cathedral organised a free entrance concert for the public at St John's Co-Cathedral. The Foundation invited Juri Camisasca to perform in this unique concert. The audience enjoyed beautiful interpretations of Gregorian chants and other religious prayers. Robert 'Juri' Camisasca (1951-), is a veteran Italian singer, songwriter and composer from Melegnano in Italy.





4.6 Inauguration of the Main Façade

On 15 January the restoration of the façade was inaugurated in time for the opening celebrations of Valletta 2018 as the European Capital for Culture. The project included the main entrance, sides, belfry, clock and wind vane. This is the first time that the main façade of the Co-Cathedral, which has an area of more than 2,000m², has undergone such a thorough restoration. This project was initiated in 2014 by the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government and St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation and was executed by the Restoration Directorate.

A press conference was held on the parvis and was attended by the Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, The Hon. Owen Bonnici; Parliamentary Secretary for Consumer Protection and Valletta 2018, The Hon. Deo Debuttista; Chairman of Valletta 2018, Mr Jason Micallef; The President of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, Mr. Wilfrid Buttigieg; the Administrative Secretary of the Church in Malta, Mr Michael Pace Ross; the Curator of the Co-Cathedral, Ms Cynthia de Giorgio, and the Restoration Directorate Architect, Jean Frendo.



4.7 Inauguration of the Restoration of The Coronation of the Virgin

During this current financial year Fr Charles Vella has restored the painting representing the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, under the guidance of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio and curator Cynthia de Giorgio. This large and majestic painting was in dire need of intervention since it had been placed in storage during the Second World War.

Past interventions had consisted of overpainting large areas, covering some of the details of the iconography and thus obscuring the original aesthetics of the composition. The layers of varnish that had been applied to the painting had darkened over the years rendering the canvas surface dull and the subject difficult to comprehend. The restoration methods used in this project reversed past interventions and brought the painting close to its former condition. The process unveiled the elegant iconography of the mannerist style of this painting which can now be safely placed as a production of the late 16th century.

On 17 May this painting was unveiled during a Press Conference organised by the Foundation and was attended by The Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, The Hon. Owen Bonnici; The President of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, Mr Wilfrid Buttigieg; the Administrative Secretary of the Church in Malta, Mr Michael Pace Ross; the Curator of St John's Co-Cathedral, Ms Cynthia de Giorgio and the restorer Fr Charles Vella.





4.8 Visitors' access to Balcony

On Tuesday 13 March 2018 a press conference was held in the sacristy of the St John's Co-Cathedral to highlight two important activities: whereby the President of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, Mr Wilfrid Buttigieg launched the opening of the internal balcony to visitors and an open evening.

For the first time the internal balcony over the main door to the co-cathedral was opened to visitors, who were able to get a bird's eye view of the nave and presbytery of the Co-Cathedral and have a vantage point for taking photographs.

It was also announced that on Monday 19 March, the public could visit the Co-Cathedral for free from 5pm till 9pm. This was done in collaboration with Heritage Malta which also had various sites open for free. 2,553 visitors availed themselves of this opportunity. In attendance together with the Foundation President were The Hon. Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government; the Administrative Secretary of the Church in Malta, Mr Michael Pace Ross; the CEO of Heritage Malta, Mr Noel Zammit; the Curator of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, Ms Cynthia de Giorgio.



4.9 EU Funding

In early 2017 the Foundation applied for EU Funding under Priority Axis PA 5 Protecting our environment, with the aim of investing in natural and cultural assets for the Caravaggio Wing & Basement Museum Spaces within the extension and refurbishment project of the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum.

In May 2018 the Foundation was informed by the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality that the Foundation had been awarded 4.5 million euros for the project.



4.10 HR Consultancy

The Foundation engaged HR expert Mr Joe Gerada, to advise on a human resources structure and an organisational structure was developed to deliver the Mission of the Foundation effectively and to handle the increase in workloads due to several major projects which were underway as well as in preparation for the growing needs of the organisation for the years ahead. The Foundation's organigram was reorganised to show what positions were already filled, what positions needed to be reorganised and the possibility of creating new positions. The study resulted in adding three new managerial positions: Operations, HR & Administration and PR, Sales & Marketing. The salary scales were also reviewed to reflect the organisational structure and current market. Mr Gerada was later appointed as Secretary to the Council of the Foundation.





5. RECRUITMENT

The development of St John's Co-Cathedral saw an increase in human capital in order to preserve and further expand the Foundation's strategic plan and attain future objectives. The Foundation's strategic goals saw the recruitment of two managers and additional custodians.

5.1 Ian Camilleri - Operations Manager

Ian has been working in operations for more than twenty years in the private sector. His responsibilities include the smooth running of the daily operations of the Foundation and the management of the infrastructure projects. Ian also assists in the smooth running of the project for the new exhibition spaces and the Caravaggio Wing. Ian is a graduate who has a Diploma in Management & Leadership.

5.2 Stephen Deguara - PR, Sales & Marketing Manager

Stephen is a University of Lincoln (UK) graduate and holds a Master's Degree in Strategic Marketing with previous work experience in PR, Media and broadcasting. His position consists of determining the demand for the products and services offered by St John's Foundation and others in the same sector in order to identify potential customers. Stephen is also responsible for putting in place strategies and implementing goals to maximise the Foundation's share of the market by strategically building a better online and offline presence. He is also involved in the overview of the Foundation's customers' reviews in order to assess and improve customer satisfaction where necessary.

5.3 Custodians

In 2018 the Foundation recruited five new custodians - three full timers: Charmaine Farrugia, Anastasiya Afanasjeva and Kirby Sciberras together with two part-timers: Annalise Muscat and Anne Marie Navarro. The responsibility of a custodian is to give visitors to the St John's complex a memorable experience. This is done by a customer service that exceeds expectations through the knowledge, skills and the attitudes of the custodian.

5.4 Worker of the Year

The Worker of the Year for 2018 was given to two custodians, Catherine Galea and Catherine Falzon Debono. They were chosen as workers of the year because they believe in the values of the Foundation and preserve the beliefs and policies the Foundation has in place. They both demonstrated clearly that certain rules and policies apply to all custodians. Actions which could have impaired the image and the smooth running of the Foundation were brought to the attention of the management to be corrected.

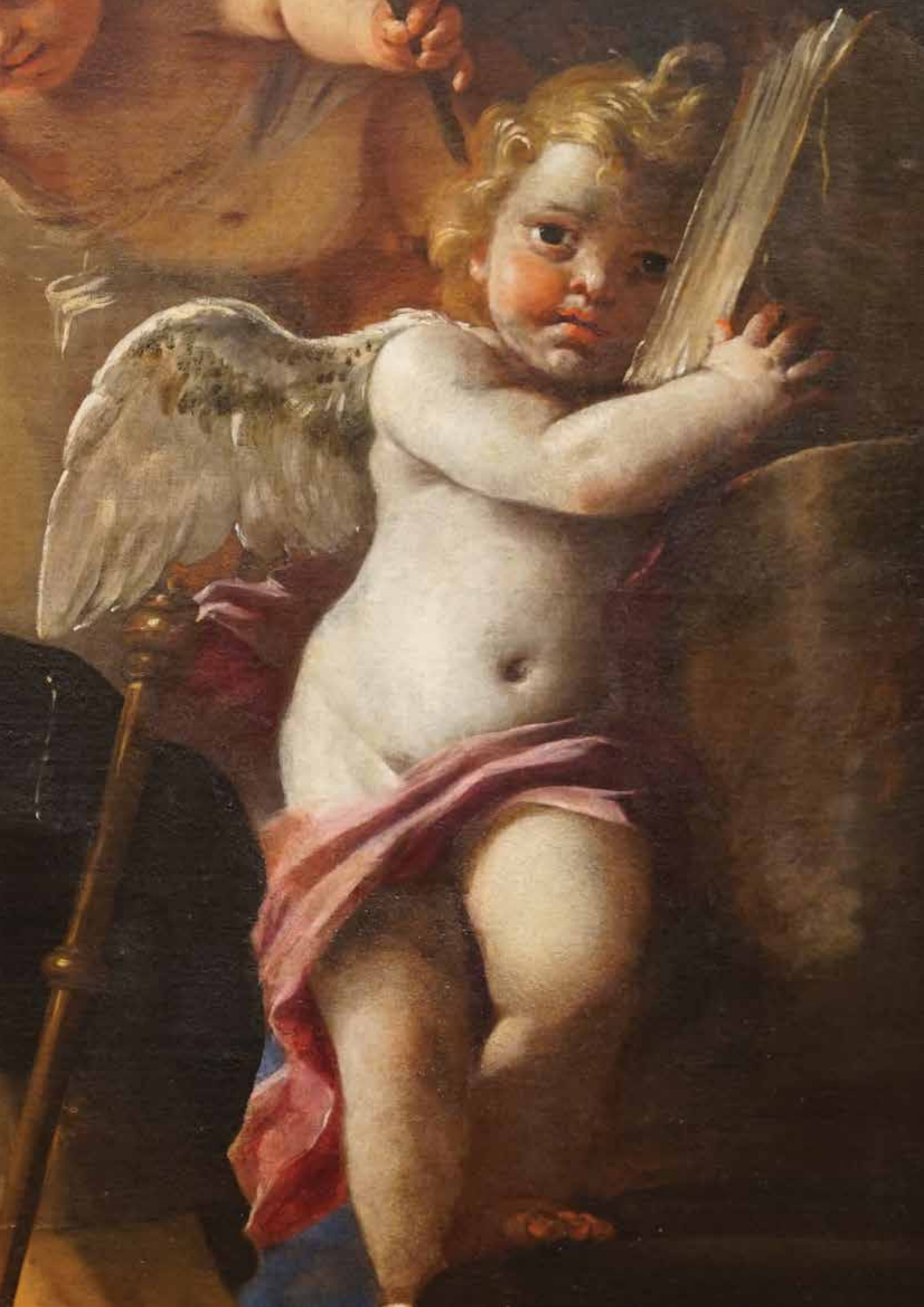




6. CONCERTS

- Carlo Diacono Oratorio's "San Paolo evangelizza I Maltesi" by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Mro Michael Laus, held on the 6 October 2017. This concert was organised by the Ministry of Justice, Culture & Local Government on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the death of Mro Carlo Diacono.
- Concert of Sacred Music by Collegium Musicum choir and orchestra under the direction of Mro Prof Dr Dion Buhagiar organised by S. Mifsud & Sons (SMS) for a group of delegates held on 19 October 2017.
- Hospice Malta fundraising concert of sacred music was held on 27 October 2017 to commemorate the World Palliative Day with the participation of the Collegium Musicum choir and orchestra under the direction of Mro Prof Dr Dion Buhagiar.
- The 23rd edition of the Malta International Choir Festival Prayer Meeting "Singing for Peace" concert was organised by the Malta Tourism Authority on 2 November 2017. During this concert sacred music was performed by different choirs. Prayers were also delivered by the leaders of the religious denominations presently serving in the community in Malta.
- A concert in aid of Dar tal-Providenza was held on 1 December 2017 by the Armed Forces of Malta on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. During this concert sacred music was performed by the Band of the Armed Forces of Malta with the participation of the Coro Bel Canto under the patronage of the President of Malta H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca and the Archbishop H.G. Mgr. Charles J. Scicluna.
- On the occasion of the Valletta International Baroque Festival organised by Teatru Manoel a concert by Ghislieri Choir and Consort was held under the direction of Giulio Prandi on the 15 January 2018. During this concert George Frideric Handel's "Fasti del Barocco Romano" was performed.
- "Messa da Requiem" with libretto and score by Chev. Mark Agius was performed by the St Paul Chamber Ensemble. Chev. Agius also conducted the orchestra. This concert was organised by the same ensemble in aid of Dar tal-Providenza on 16 March 2018 under the distinguished patronage of Archbishop Emeritus Mgr Paul Cremona.





- “Stradivarius Best of Classics Concert” by Bach, Schubert and Mozart was performed on the 18 May 2018 by Edwin Marton, composer, conductor and violinist. This concert was organised by Lisa Maria Foundation.
- The Eighth Annual Orchestral Charity Concert was organised in aid of the philanthropic activities of the Maltese Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, on the 13 June 2018 to commemorate the Feast Day of St John the Baptist, Patron Saint of the Order of Malta, which falls on 24 June. The concert was performed by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra led by Marcelline Agius, the Resident Conductor Prof. Michael Laus, with the participation of Tenor Juan Gambina and the Goldberg Ensemble Choir. The programme took the audience on a pleasant musical trip, giving a brilliant performance of works by Bach, Gibbons, Handel and Haydn.
- A concert of sacred music organised by the St John’s Co-Cathedral Foundation was performed by Italian singer-songwriter and composer Roberto Camisasca, best known as Juri Camisasca, on the 27 July 2018.





7. DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

- Hon. Tony Blair, Former British Prime Minister
5 August 2017
- H.B. Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Cyprus
20 September 2017
- H.E. Ian Khama, President of Botswana
3 October 2017
- H.E. John Kerry, Former Secretary of State of the United States
7 October 2017
- Hon. Rosy Bindi, President of Antimafia Commission – Italy
24 October 2017
- H.E. the Right Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations
23 November 2017
- His Majesty King Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Ashanti King of Ghana
3 March 2018
- H.E. Mr Ilir Meta, President of the Republic of Albania
26 March 2018
- H.E. Prof Dr Srdjan Darmanović, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro
11 April 2018
- H.E. Nicola Renzi, Minister of Foreign and Political Affairs and Justice of the Republic of San Marino
10 May 2018
- H.E. Juan Rafel Mesa Zuleta, Ambassador of Colombia in Italy and Malta and the Director of Europe within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Juan Guillermo Castro
4 June 2018







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*Detail from The Baptism of Christ,
Giuseppe Mazzuoli, 1703*
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