

APPRECIATION —

Father Joseph Mizzi

Father Joseph Mizzi, who died on the 20th June last year, was a well-known figure to readers of *Melita Historica* and members of the Historical Society. His writings and contacts in Malta and abroad made him known in cultural circles and among scholars interested in the study of history. Very few, however, are aware of the real extent and value of his contribution to historical and, in a sense, theological research.

Father Joseph Mizzi was born on the 21st July 1911 and was ordained priest on the 25th July 1937. Soon after his ordination, the bishop, Mgr Maurus Caruana, sent him to the Benedictine Abbey of Montecassino to study Palaeography and the organisation of archives under the direction of the well-known Maltese palaeographer Dom Maurus Inguanez. On his return to Malta, Archbishop Caruana commissioned him to start organising the Inquisitors' Archives which were at the time housed at the Archbishop's Palace, now at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina. In 1953 the Archives Committee of the (Royal) University of Malta entrusted him with the work of cataloguing the manuscripts preserved in the Archives of the Sovereign Order of Malta at the Public Library. The result of his long and patient work (1964-1979) which was started after extensive

studies in Naples, Rome, Paris and London, may well be considered as his major contribution to the study of the history of the Maltese Islands and that of the Sovereign Order of Malta: *The Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in the Royal Malta Library* in 14 volumes, eight of which published under his name, the remaining six in collaboration with Can. A. Zammit Gabarretta and Can. (now Mgr Professor) V. Borg. In the meantime Fr Mizzi had compiled the so far most complete *Bibliography of the Order of St John of Jerusalem* covering 1507 titles published between 1925 and 1969.

In the field of "Vetus Latina" and Medieval Palaeography Fr Mizzi published important articles in some of the most quoted specialised periodicals: *La formula della consacrazione in una citazione biblica di Sant'Agostino* in *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, LXVII, Rome, 1953; *The Latin Text of Matth. V-VII in St Augustine's De Sermone Domini in monte* in *Augustiniana*, IV, Louvain, 1954; *Interessanti frammenti dell'Epistola ad Hebraeos in un codice liturgico maltese* in *Rivista Biblica*, Firenze, 1955; *The Latin Text of the Gospel Quotations in St Augustine's "De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII Liber Unus* in *Augustiniana* XII, Louvain, 1962; *The Vulgate Text of the Supplemental Pages of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis* in *Sacris Erudiri*, XIV, Steen-

brugge, 1963; *A Comparative Study of Some Portions of Cod. Palatinus and Cod. Bobiensis* in *Revue Benedictine*, LXXV, Maredsous, 1965. Maltese periodicals and newspapers which published some of his articles were *Lucerna*, *Melita Theologica*, *Malta*, and *Lehen is-Sewwa*.

Father Mizzi, though by nature not a man of action, contributed not indifferently — mainly through writing and lecturing — to the great battles in defence of the Faith, the traditional values of the Catholic Church and those of his own country he believed in and the fundamental principles on which social peace is solidly based. In this connection, his numerous articles in *Malta*, *Lehen is-Sewwa*, *The Bulletin* and *Il-Qawmien*, were well documented and meticulously written. Most of them — practically all of them — remained unsigned but their informed read-

er will have no doubt as to their authorship. In the sixties and early seventies he was very active in supporting the Social Action Movement whose Centre of Social Studies he lead for some years. On the international level, during these last fifteen post-conciliar years, Fr Mizzi was particularly energetic in contributing articles to traditionalist periodicals. His private correspondence with the principal traditionalist writers and leaders may, in future, provide much material for a thorough study not only of his personality but also of his active part in the post-conciliar traditionalist movement. The future might, in this connection, prove him either right or wrong. Whatever the judgement, he will certainly be remembered as an erudite scholar and an upright and humble priest.

f.p.m.

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