

THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

The Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Malta traces its origin to its amalgamation on 22 November 1745 with that of the Blessed Sacrament which had already existed since the year 1714 in the Church of St Paul Shipwrecked in Valletta. The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament was first instituted in Rome in the year 1559 in honour of the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist and its members were in duty bound to accompany in their robes the procession of the Viaticum to the houses of persons lying at death's door. This was in accordance with the terms of the Bull of Julius II who had sanctioned the erection of this Archconfraternity in the Basilica of "San Lorenzo in Damasco" in the same year.

A similar guild was erected in the Church of "Sancta Maria della Minerva" by Pope Paul III (Cf. "Cum certas"). Paul V endowed these Guilds with several indulgencies while Clement VIII confirmed the indulgencies granted by Paul III and Paul V. In 1678 Pope Innocent XI in the Bull "Injuncta Nobis"



The gold-embroidered silk Medallion that the Guild Members wear at the neck during processions and other functions during which they put on a white gown with a red cord tasselled girdle at the waist.

renewed the Bull of Paul III and Pope Innocent XII in his Bull "Debitum Pastoralis", increased the indulgences and published certain rules with regard to the processions accompanying the Viaticum. Most of these Papal Indulgences concerned quite naturally the Feast of "CORPUS DOMINI". This Feast was set up by the Roman Catholic Church with the express purpose of dedicating eight days in succession every year for the devout adoration of the "CORPUS DOMINI" culminating in a Solemn Procession through the main streets of the City as indicated in the Bull "Transiturus in hoc Mundo" of Urban IV and as confirmed by Clement V and again later by Julius III.

The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in the Collegiate and Parochial Church of St Paul Shipwrecked in Valletta was set up on the 10th of May 1714 and this event is registered in the Confraternity's "Libro delle Consulte" of the year 1714. The Archpriest of the Collegiate Church was then requested by the Members to file a "Ricorso" to the Bishop for ecclesiastical approval. This "Memoriale" with the relative Decree for the erection of the "Veneranda Confraternità del SSmo.Sacramento" may be seen in the Guild's Archives where we read that a Special Mass with General Communion of the Members was held, after which a Processional Viaticum followed from the Church of St Paul to the "Sacra Infermeria" for the benefit of patients who were on the danger list at that hospital. The preacher on this occasion was Father Pio GioBatta Lancellotti, S.J., a Missionary. On the 6th June 1717 the Members elected the "Ufficiali" of the Guild and they drew up the Statute regulating the Confraternity when they met in the Chapel of "Nostra Signora della Carità", which Statute was later submitted to the Bishop for his approval. On the 12th July 1743 the "Cathedra" of the "Pia Devozione del Sacro Cuore di Gesu" proposed the amalgamation of their Sodality with the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament without prejudice either to their original in-

The Monstrance — a gift of the Grandmaster Pinto — which is mounted on the Main Altar on the Feasts of "Corpus Domini" and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



stitution or to the maintenance of the new functions that would be added for the said devotions and on the 22nd November 1745 the "Sodalità della Pia Adorazione Perpetua" became amalgamated with the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament" in terms of the "Carteggio Eucaristico". Henceforth the Guild took the name of "Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" as a short term of the fuller "Confraternità del SSmo.Sacramento e del SSmo.Cuore di Gesu". In the "Libro delle Consulte" of June 1831, there is registered the aggregation of this Confraternity with that of "Santa Maria della Pace" of Rome. The relative Indulgences may be seen in the Archives of the Guild (Lib.I Fol.128/129).

The Confraternity is also associated with that of "I Guardiani della Veneranda Arciconfraternita dell'Adorazione Perpetua del Santissimo Sacramento" in the Basilica of "Sancta Maria ad Martieres" known as "La Rotonda" (the Pantheon d'Agrippa in Rome) erected by His Holiness Clement III with the "Breve" of the 5th July 1732, although under the name of Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament it had already been in existence since the year 1559. Another interesting reference is to be found in the "Breve" in which the Confraternity was endowed with the privilege of imparting the Papal Blessing on the Feasts of "CORPUS DOMINI" and on that of the Epiphany when the Preacher may bless the People with the Holy Cross, so long as the said preacher first informs the Bishop of his intention as prescribed in the "Breve" as approved by Pope Leo XIII.

The Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had its origin in the Monastery of the "Visitandine" of Paray-le-Monial in France in the year 1693. Father Gilifet, S.J., in the year 1733 relates that there were no less than 300 branches of this Congregation in existence in various dioceses and towns all approved by the Bishops and the Holy Father. It was however in the month of February 1801 when, through the tireless work of Father Luigi Felice, S.J., there was established in Rome for the first time the "Pia Unione del Cuor di Gesu" in the Church of "Santa Maria della Pigna" which belonged to the Pauline Fathers. Two years later it was transferred to the Church of "Santa Maria della Pace" and was granted the title of Archconfraternity and endowed with all connected privileges and indulgences by Pope Pius VII, who also granted it the power to aggregate to itself other similar associations and to confer on them the same privileges and indulgences given to it by the Roman Pontiffs. In the course of time numerous such associations were amalgamated with the "Primaria", among which was numbered also that in Malta which was set up in the Sarria Church

in Floriana by the Rev. Father Luigi Ferrara, S.J., in the year 1865 as may be seen in the "Pagella di Aggregazione all'Arciconfraternita", authorized by the Episcopal Curia. The aim of these Congregations was twofold. The first was general and common to all. The second was particular and had to be adapted to each particular place according to local customs and traditions. The general scope was to administer to the faithful of goodwill spiritual instruction that would inspire them to aspire after Christian perfection in their way of life, the best antidote to the poison of vice in general. The "Pia Unione" specialized in the propagation of the devotions of the faithful to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and in rekindling in the hearts of mankind the fire of Divine Charity.

The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and then later when amalgamated with that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus numbered in its ranks through almost three centuries many of the most distinguished personalities amongst the citizens of Malta. In the Archives may be seen the roll of Rectors amongst whom were Baron Pietro Paolo Xara, Signor Isidoro Viani, Signor Carlo Borghese, Dr. Pietro Paolo Hellul, Baron Ercole Testaferrata, Signor Giacomo Alliard, Dr. Pietro de Franchi, Signor Giacomo Bologna, Baron DePiro, Dr. Damale Bonici, Baron Gregorio Bonici, Signor M. Marchesi, Dr. Benedetto Schembri, Baron Calcedonio Azopardi, Marchese Gerolamo Delicata, Baron Lorenzo Galea, His Grace Mgr. F.S. Caruana, Archbishop of Malta and of Rhodes, Baron Dr. Lorenzo Galea, Archdeacon Dr. Salvatore Lanzon, Vicar General, Marquis Emmle. Testaferrata Bonici, Count Francesco Messina, LL.D., Dr. Gius. E. Reynaud, LL.D., and many, many others. The Confraternity has a beautiful Oratory in a fairly large hall access to which is through a door in the passage which connects the larger Sacristy with the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. The door opens on a flight of steps leading to the Oratory, near which there is also a small room that serves as a Sacristy and in which may be found the Archives stored in an antique bookcase. Worthy of note are the Altarpiece and the fourteen Stations of the Cross.

It will indeed be a sad day for Malta in general and for the City of Valletta in particular if this venerable and long established Confraternity were to be allowed to fade away owing to lack of new entrants to fill the gaps of those who are called to Higher Service. For about three centuries this Guild was the pride of the parishioners of the Collegiate Church of St Paul Shipwrecked in Valletta. May it still prosper under the protection of its Patron St. Paul "Predicator Veritatis et Doctor Gentium".

Edgar G. Montanaro



A familiar site in Valletta . . . members of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus taking part in one of the traditional processions

THE LIST OF THE RECTORS OF THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT and of THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS erected in the COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SAINT PAUL SHIPWRECKED in the CITY OF VALLETTA.

1714 - Bernardo Piscopo; 1715 - Baron Pietro Paolo Xara; 1716 - Baron Testaferrata; 1717 - Antonio Bonnici; 1718 - Domenico Xara; 1719 - Carmelo Borg; 1720-21 - Dr. Salvatore Cassar; 1722 - Isidoro Viani; 1723 - Gaetano Bologna; 1724 - Ludovico Gatt; 1725 - Carlo Borghese; 1726 - Dr. Pietro Paolo Hellul; 1727-28 - Baron Ercole Testaferrata; 1729 - Giacomo Alliand; 1730 - Giuseppe Cuschieri; 1731 - Dr. P. DeFranchi; 1732 - Giacomo Bologna; 1733-34 - Domenico Azzopardi; 1735 - Carmelo Borg; 1736 - Claudio Muscat; 1737 - Baron F. Testaferrata; 1738 - Baron DePiro; 1739-40 - Notary Sant; 1741-42 - Dr. Damale Bonnici; 1743-44 - Dr. Gio-Batta Cassar; 1745-46 - Dr. Gaetano Azzopardi; 1747 - Ignazio Gauci; 1748-50 - Baron Saverio Gatt; 1751-55 - Baron Xiberras; 1756 - Baron Xara; 1757-60 - Baron Gregorio Bonnici; 1761-64 - M. Marchesi; 1765-68 - Baron Pasquale Xiberras; 1769-72 - Marquis Diego Muscat; 1773-76 - Innocenzo Mallia; 1777-79 - Baron Gregorio Bonnici; 1780-83 - Dr. Benedetto Schembri; 1785 - Revd. Emidio Mallia; 1789-95 - Baron Calcedonio Azzopardi; 1795-1805 - Marquis Gerolamo Delicata; 1807-1811 - Baron Lorenzo Galea; 1812-1816 - Dr. Claudio Vincenzo Bonnici; 1825-29 - Emmanuele

Lanzon; 1830-31 - Baron Lorenzo Galea; 1832-34 - His Grace Mgr. Francesco Saverio Caruana, Archbishop of Malta and of Rhodes; 1834-36 - Pietro Paolo Bonnici; 1836-38 - Baron Dr. Lorenzo Galea; 1838-42 - Archdeacon Dr. Salvatore Lanzon, Vicar-General; 1842-44 - Revd. Giuseppe dei Baroni Galea; 1844-47 - Revd. Dr. Salvatore Busuttil; 1848-49 - Baron Pietro Paolo Galea; 1849-51 - Saverio Bonnici; 1851-53 - Saverio Bonnici; 1853-55 - Baron Pietro Paolo Galea; 1855-56 - Baron Pietro Paolo Galea; 1857-65 - Judge Dr. Giovanni Conti; 1865-67 - Filippo Darmanin whilst Judge Dr. Giovanni Conti was elected Honorary Rector; 1867-73 - Carlo Maria Muscat; 1873-79 - Marquis Emmle. Testaferrata Bonnici; 1879-85 - Alessandro Chapelle, LL.D.; 1885-93 - Marquis Testaferrata; 1897-98 - Nicola Galea; 1899-1900 - Marquis Emmle. Testaferrata Bonnici; 1901-1902 - Marquis Emmle. Testaferrata Bonnici; 1903-1915 - Count Francesco Messina LL.D.; 1916-18 - Giuseppe Scicluna, Honorary Rectors Count Messina and Giovanni Testa; 1918-20 - G. Imbroli; 1921-26 - Giuseppe Scicluna; 1926-28 - Notary Angelo Cachia; 1929-35 - Luigi Galea; 1935-37 - Notary Angelo Cachia; 1939-45 - Carmelo Attard; 1945-46 - Chev. Jos. H. Reynaud LL.D.; 1946-48 - Salvatore Xuereb LL.D.; 1948-62 - Chev. Jos. J. Reynaud, LL.D.

REFERENCE

Archives of the Guild.

