400th anniversary of Zabbar parish

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The 400th anniversary of Our Lady of Graces was celebrated in Zabbar, on October 15, 2016. The celebration was marked by the blessing of a statue of the Mother of God of Zabbar, dedicated to Our Lady of Graces, patron saint of Zabbar parish.

**Zabbar’s constant development as a parish**

After the completion of the church, the foundation stone was laid for a larger church, which was eventually finished in 1629. The church was designed by an architect named dello, who had acquired a reputation in building parish churches and palaces. The new church followed the principles of the Counter-Reformation, according to which the church was designed in a baroque style.

The church was almost completed within 50 years, which was a considerable achievement. This was mainly due to the substantial amount of donations received from parishioners and visitors.

On January 10, 1616, Fr. Angelo Paternostro, who was apparently well known and very dedicated to his flock, was appointed the first parish priest of Zabbar.

The choice of Our Lady of Graces as the parish church was very far-sighted. It enjoyed great devotion, and moreover, if the need arose, as actually happened, it was enough space in front and around it.

Zabbar suffered great damage during the war and many people had to be evacuated. The old vestry was destroyed but the sanctuary itself was not damaged even though bombs hit several nearby buildings.

After repairing the sanctuary from debris and from the effect of the bombs, the people faced the plague of 1622, and later the flood of 1822. These and other hazards encouraged the people to seek help from Our Lady of Graces, patron saint of Zabbar.

The two local band clubs, set up before the Great Siege, resisted a French battalion during the war and many people had to be evacuated. The old vestry was destroyed but the sanctuary itself was not damaged even though bombs hit several nearby buildings.

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