



ST JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL - VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Centuries after the first stones of this magnificent monument to our faith and heritage were laid projects carrying us further into the 21st century have been taking place.



Visitors wanting to see Caravaggio's *Beheading of St John the Baptist* can now look forward to a whole new experience while viewing this famous painting and another, *St Jerome Writing*, in the dedicated space they richly deserve.

The new Caravaggio Wing, situated next to the cathedral, will house both works plus all 29 pieces in the set of St John's tapestries. This is the largest complete series of tapestries in the world and is modelled on an earlier set designed in 1622 by Peter Paul Rubens for Isabella, Infanta of Spain and Sovereign of the Southern Netherlands. They depict the *Triumph of the Eucharist* and other scenes from the life of Christ.

Almost half a million people a year visit St John's Co-Cathedral. The new annex, housing the wing will not only provide protection from environmental damage, it will improve the flow of visitors, their sight lines to the exhibits and their access to information. There are also plans underway to create more interaction, and active participation for everyone which will certainly go a long way to making visits even more attractive. This will benefit, not only tourists who visit, but locals of all generations, who are in danger of taking these wonderful treasures for granted.

Time used to create the Caravaggio Wing was well spent. The technical restoration of the tapestries, initially restored in Belgium by the De Wit Restoration Laboratories, ensured the conservation of their delicate fabric, while losses and open seams were reinforced and lined for strength and support. And the wing is also designed to keep temperature and humidity levels constant, ensuring the correct environment needed for all the exhibits.

The Maltese Islands may be small but the historical and cultural value of buildings such as St John's Co-Cathedral and its priceless paintings and artifacts is immense. The Caravaggio Wing will ensure that this precious heritage can be revered for centuries to come.