



# Shaping Minds and Souls: Jesuit Missions and the Mediterranean World

## Project brief

### Aims & objectives

This international research initiative examines the Society of Jesus' formative influence on early modern Mediterranean societies, with a focus on Malta. Using an interdisciplinary approach—spanning Church History, Art History, Archaeology, and Heritage Science—the project:

- Explores the Jesuits' religious, educational, and artistic roles in Hospitaller Malta;
- Supports conservation of the Jesuits' Church and the *Collegium Melitense* in Valletta;
- Situates Malta within broader Jesuit networks across the Mediterranean.

The project culminates in a major symposium (May 2025) at the Jesuits' Church in Valletta, bringing together leading scholars to share research and foster collaboration.

## Methodology

This research is grounded in a layered, cross-disciplinary framework combining archival, material, and interpretive approaches:

**Archival Research:** Consultations of local, and international archives, including analysis of missionary reports, correspondence, and local Jesuit chronicles.

**Building Archaeology:** Stratigraphic and architectural analysis of the Jesuit complex, with comparative Mediterranean case studies.

**Heritage Science:** Conservation diagnostics and review of interventions since 2015, integrated with sustainability goals.

**Cultural Studies:** Analysis of how a Jesuit strategy in the arts, married doctrinal orthodoxy with sensory engagement.

**Public Engagement:** A programme of curated exhibitions, tours of the Valletta complex, and open-access scholarly outputs.



## Results & conclusions

**Research Outputs:** An international symposium (May 2025) in Valletta gathers experts to examine themes from missionary theology to Baroque material culture. Contributions will be published in a peer-reviewed volume and made available online.

**Archaeological Insights:** The Jesuit complex is being re-evaluated as a cornerstone of Malta's ecclesiastical and urban landscape, with architectural choices revealing broader formative intentions.

**Long-term Legacy:** The project promotes a model for linking academic research and heritage conservation while enhancing awareness of the Jesuits' role in shaping Mediterranean identity within the context of the Catholic reform in the early Modern period and beyond.