
*Speech Delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta,
on the occasion of The Feast of The Patron Saint of The Sovereign Military
Order Of Malta, 17 June 2018*

Distinguished guests,
Dear friends.

Your Excellency, it is a pleasure to join you at this celebration ahead of the Feast of St John the Baptist.

I trust that you have all enjoyed your stay in Malta, over the past days.

Let me also commend your initiative, in organising a number of fund-raising events during these days, so that the proceeds from this event will contribute to the St John the Baptist Hospital in Rome.

This is another practical way for the Order to continue its legacy of the Hospitallers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto for his recent election, earlier this year, as the 80th Grandmaster of the Order.

Let me also augur the Order of St John success with the ongoing process of reform, to restore the commitment that it has to authentic spiritual values, which are so essential in today's uncertain times.

As we all know, although bilateral relations were established between Malta and the Sovereign Military Order of St John in 1966, the history which unites us goes back through the centuries.

Our heritage is founded on a shared respect for Christianity, which is rooted in our culture, and which continues to give us the strength to face the challenges of contemporary life.

This spirit of respect is reflected in the responsibility, which all of us should feel, to promote and protect universal human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the values of social justice.

For this reason, I am pleased to note that, under its aid agency, "Malteser International", the Order is assisting some of the most vulnerable groups in the poorest regions of the world.

Thanks to the work being done by the volunteers and professionals who form part of this important organisation, the Order is sending a strong message of solidarity, of hope, and of peace.

I believe that we all must be led, in all our endeavours for peace, by the inspiring words of Pope Francis, who said;

"Today more than ever, I think it is necessary to educate ourselves in solidarity, to rediscover the value and meaning of this very uncomfortable word, which oftentimes has been left aside,

and to make it become a basic attitude in decisions made at the political, economic and financial levels, in relationships between persons, peoples, and nations.”

These inspiring words by Pope Francis urge us, to seek new opportunities for solidarity and support, within our own countries and as an international community.

This is one of the reasons why Malta remains committed to fulfil its vocation as a geo-strategic hub for dialogue and peace, among the diverse cultures and peoples of the Mediterranean Region.

I am confident that Your Excellency will contribute towards these goals, by building upon the work of your predecessors, and strengthening the bilateral relations between the Sovereign Military Order and Malta.

Dear friends,

Let us now raise our glasses, in celebration of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and the excellent relations between Malta and the Order.