
*Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta on
the occasion of the inauguration of the Meditation Garden at the
Millennium Chapel, 27 August 2018*

Dear friends,

It is my pleasure to inaugurate the opening of this unique garden, which is creating a space of safety, serenity, and peace, in the busy heart of St Julian's.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Millennium Chapel team their dedication and hard work, in particular Fr Hilary, and his collaborators on this project, including Richard England, Duncan Polidano, and Noel Attard.

Most importantly, let us remember the fact that the countless visitors and community members, who live and make use of the Paceville area, will have the opportunity to visit this garden.

In the process, I augur that they will be transformed by its atmosphere of contemplation and tranquility.

Too often, in recent years, urban architecture in the Maltese Islands has neglected the vital importance of green and open spaces. We cannot afford to forget the need for such spaces, and their important contribution to the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of our communities.

In fact, on my many visits to schools around Malta and Gozo, children and young people often speak about the lack of access that they have, to green and healthy spaces.

This is why I opened the private gardens of San Anton Palace, to create the President's Secret Garden, which has, over the last few years, welcomed thousands of children to participate in a unique and fully interactive community of learning.

Just like the Secret Garden, this Meditation Garden here in Paceville will also promote new connections and relationships, not only between different individuals and groups, but also with our historical heritage.

I am informed that the plants selected for this garden are inspired by the Bible, and we cannot forget that the garden has always been a powerful symbol of human spirituality.

The garden is a place where, whatever difficult moments may come our way, we can always find a reminder of the simple holiness that exists in our daily lives.

This connection between spirituality and green spaces was positively explored by the National Hub for Ethnobotanical Research, within my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

The Hub's first publication, entitled 'Cloistered Spaces', talks about the beauty of such spaces, and the need for their preservation and promotion. Therefore, I am so pleased to see that this garden is another example of such a space.

On concluding, I augur that this Meditation Garden shall be used by many people, who are seeking refuge and peace in today's uncertain world.

I am confident that the Millennium Chapel shall continue to provide essential support and care, for all the people who walk through its doors.

Thank you for your attention, and enjoy the rest of the evening.