



JOSEPH BEZZINA

THE FOUR FOREMOST ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHIVES OF MALTA

The Republic of Malta is a small and densely-populated island nation in southern Europe, member of the European Union since 1 May 2004. It consists of an archipelago made up of three islands – Malta, Gozo, and Comino – in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea directly south of Italy and north of Africa.

Malta has a total population of 416,055 (*Census* 2011), of which 384,912 live in the main island, and 31,143 in Gozo and Comino. The archipelago has a population density of 1,317 inhabitants per sq km, the highest in the EU. For comparison, Finland, with the least population density in the EU, has just 17.6 inhabitants per sq km; while the Netherlands, in the second place after Malta, has 492.2 inhabitants per sq km. The people live in 68 towns and villages, 54 in Malta, and 14 in Gozo.

The ecclesiastical province of Malta has two dioceses, Malta and Gozo with Comino¹. There are three major ecclesiastical archives: the AAM, the Archbishop's Archives, Malta; the ACM, the Cathedral Archives, Malta, that also houses the archives of the Inquisition and other deposits; and the AEG, the Episcopal Archives, Gozo. The Government is the owner of another important partly religious archives, the AOM, the Archives of the Order of Malta, namely the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Rhodes, and Malta; now known as the Knights of Malta.

The eighty-three parish churches – sixty-eight in Malta and fifteen in Gozo – also have their own archives. The eleven religious male orders working in Malta, the first one since 1370, also have their archives. So do the six communities of cloistered nuns and the eighteen congregations of sisters on the island. One of the male religious orders, all six cloistered communities, and five of the female congregations were founded in Malta itself. The several hundred religious

¹ For an overview of the ecclesiastical archives at Malta, see J. BEZZINA, *The Ecclesiastical Archives–Malta*, in *Archiva Ecclesiae* 45-46 (2002-2003) 251-256; and J. BEZZINA, *Archives as cultural centres: the Malta experience*, in *Archiva Ecclesiae* 45-46 (2002-2003) 169-172.

foundations, institutions, and societies in both dioceses also have their own small or large archives².

These ecclesiastical archives contain a rich heritage documenting the life and times of the people of Malta from the eleventh century onwards. The following description provides a view of the holdings of the three major ecclesiastical archives and that of the Order of Malta, as well as an account of their organization and digitalization at the beginning of the twenty-first century³.

1. AAM – ARCHIVUM ARCHIEPISCOPALIS MELITENSIS

The foundation of the Church in Malta goes back to the early centuries. As recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (28, 1), Saint Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles, was shipwrecked on the coast of Malta on his voyage to Rome in the year 60. The Bishopric of Malta was possibly set up some time after 535. That year General Belisarius occupied Malta and Gozo on behalf of Emperor Justinian I and the Maltese archipelago passed under the Byzantine sphere of influence with nearby Sicily⁴.

This strategically-located archipelago has been ruled and fought over by various powers over the centuries and this led to the destruction of any documentation that might have been created in the early centuries. The history of the Church in Malta in early times can only be gleaned from foreign sources, archaeological finds, and oral tradition.

A lot of work has been done in this field in the past years by Professor Stanley Fiorini who, with the help of several others, is researching and publishing documents related to Malta in foreign archives. Worthy of mention as regards the local Church is the publication of documents redacted by the *Cancellaria Apostolica* and the

² For an overview of both the ecclesiastical and civil archives in Malta, see A. MIFSUD, *Appunti sugli archivi di Malta. Origine, sviluppo e vicende degli archivi degli Ospedalieri. Archivi Municipali. Archivi ecclesiastici*, in *Archivum Melitense II* (1912-1913) 9-67; CH. FARRUGIA, *L-Arkivji ta' Malta* (= *Kullana Kulturali* 67), Malta 2006.

³ For the following information on the four archival collections, the author would like to thank the archivists and their assistants: AAM – Joseph Busuttill, Lorenzo Zahra, and Vic-George Vassallo; ACM – John Azzopardi and Mario Gauci; AEG – Joseph Bezzina and Giovann Curmi; AOM – Maroma Camilleri and Theresa M. Vann.

⁴ For a short history of the Church in Malta, see (in order of publication): A. FERRIS, *Storia Ecclesiastica di Malta raccontata in compendio*, Malta 1877; A. BONNICI, *History of the Church in Malta*, 3vols, Malta 1967-75; and J. BEZZINA, *Storja tal-Knisja f'Malta* (= *Kullana Kulturali* 42), Pietà/Malta 2001.

Camera Apostolica between 416 and 1479 preserved at the Vatican Secret Archives⁵.

The AAM – *Archivum Archiepiscopalis Melitensis* – was initially located at the Archbishop's Palace in Mdina, the old capital city of Malta. A Bishop's residence in the city is recorded in 1445. In the mid-1630s, the residence was transferred to Valletta, the new capital city, and the archives followed suit. In the late 1970s, when the Bishop's Curia moved to more spacious premises in Floriana, a suburb of the city, the archives was transferred there.

The archives has a number of miscellaneous items from 1450 to 1531, but its bulk is from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. In 1530, Emperor Charles V donated Malta and Gozo to the Knights of Saint John. The bishops of Malta began to reside permanently on the island and, as a result, the archives of the Malta Bishopric became more consistent.

In the mid-1940s, Monsignor Arthur Bonnici (1903-1978), the general secretary at the Curia, took upon himself the task to systemise the archives as there was no official archivist. Soon afterwards, in 1950, his love for history led him to found the *Malta Historical Society*. After his demise, Reverend Joseph Busuttill was appointed Archivist and he proceeded on the footsteps of his predecessor.

Bonnici divided the AAM into two: the *Secretariat Collection* and the *Curia Collection*, each of which was in turn divided into several sections and, sometimes, subsections. He published a hand-list of his cataloguing in 1974⁶. During the transfer of the archives from Valletta to Floriana, thousands of more documents were unearthed from the former Palace stables and relocated to Floriana. Busuttill, with the help of Lorenzo Zahra, an assistant, sorted out this hitherto discarded mass creating a third collection and published a hand-list in 2003⁷. It is being referred to as the *General Collection*. The following list provides a synthesis of the holdings.

Secretariat Collection. This collection is divided into nineteen sections:

(1) MELIVETANA: POSITIONES ET SENTENTIAE – proceedings concerning

⁵ *Archivio Secreto Vaticano: Cancellaria Apostolica and Camera Apostolica (416-1479)* : *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*, IV/2, edited by George Aquilina – Stanley Fiorini, Malta 2005.

⁶ A. BONNICI, *The Archiepiscopal Archives Malta*, in *Melita Historica* 6 (1972-75) 307-312.

⁷ J. BUSUTTIL, *Descriptive hand-list of the Archiepiscopal archives, Floriana*, in *Melita Historica* 13 (2000-2003) 421-423.

ecclesiastical bodies and individuals adjudicated in Rome, including administration of churches and privileges (1687-1756).

(2) BREVIA ET CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLICAE: ACTA ET EPISTULAE EPISCOPORUM – correspondence to and from the Holy See and local ecclesiastical authorities; as well as acts and letters of the Bishops of Malta (1541-1888). In 1889, this section was subdivided into the following two sections.

(3) RESCRIPTA SANCTAE SEDIS – rescripts and favours granted by various Roman Congregations to entities and persons in Malta (1889+). It has 11 volumes of indexes.

(4) EPISTULAE SECRETARIAE – correspondence from and to bishops (1889+). After 1916, this section was subdivided into five subsections:

(A) correspondence with Holy See and Apostolic Nuncio;

(B) correspondence with the Cathedral Chapter;

(C) correspondence with the Government;

(D) correspondence with private persons;

(E) ecclesiastical appointments.

(5) VISITATIONES APOSTOLICAE ET PASTORALES – reports produced during pastoral visits, including church inventories (1570+).

(6) SYNODUS, CONCILIA, STATUTA CAPITULARIA – manuscripts and printed books with the acts and decrees of diocesan synods and statutes of Collegiate Chapters (1558+).

(7) ECCLESIA ET STATUS – correspondence between the Curia and State on Church-State matters.

(8) LITTERAE TESTIMONIALES – testimonials issued by the Curia to candidates for the admission to Religious Orders or for the acquisition of Church benefices (1897+).

(9) LITTERAE DIMISSORIALES – letters of recommendation by the Ordinary to candidates to the priesthood to receive the ordination elsewhere (1897+).

(10) REGESTA ORDINATIONUM – record of the Holy Ordinations, including privileges granted.

(11) DOCUMENTA ORDINATIONUM – documents for the reception of Holy Orders (1915+).

(12) CONFIRMATIONES – records of confirmations (1831+).

(13) PRAECIPUI EVENTUS – a collection of documents, descriptions, and publications of special ecclesiastical events (1860+).

(14) CONTENTIONES – litigations between ecclesiastics and ecclesiastical bodies.

(15) RELATIONES PARROCHI – annual reports drawn by parish-priests (1921+).

(16) PROFESSIONES FIDEI – professions of Faith by adults received in the Catholic Church.

(17) STATISTICA – statistical data of births, confirmations, marriages, and deaths in each parish; including records on the spiritual status of each parish, the number of priests (diocesan and regular), nuns, church schools, orphanages, hospitals, and hospices.

(18) MISCELLANEA – a collection of documents generated by Diocesan Boards.

(19) EPISCOPORUM CONFERENTIA MELITENSIS – the acts, correspondence, and documents of the Episcopal Conference of Malta.

Curia Collection. This collection is divided into seventeen sections:

(1) ACTI CIVILI – contains decrees, pious foundations, ecclesiastical appointments and resignations, authorizations and so forth (1614+).

(2) SUPPLICHE – petitions or *ricorsi* for the buying and selling of ecclesiastical property, building of churches, and parish houses, reduction or redemption of burdens, correction of official records and so forth (1668+).

(3) PAROECIAS ERECTIO – documents for the establishment of parishes, collegiate chapters, and canonries (16 century+).

(4) REGISTRUM EDICTORUM – Curia edicts, circulars, and pastoral letters (1827+).

(5) MATRIMONIA – this section containing documents related to marriages and is divided into five subsections:

(A) applications for marriages;

(B) marriage banns (1895+)

(C) marriage dispensations (1889+)

(D) certificates of freedom to marry (17 century+).

(6) ACTI GIUDIZIALI – this section containing documents of a judiciary character is divided into two subsections:

(A) *Acta Civilia* – civil cases adjudicated in the Bishop's Court (16 century to 1775);

(B) *Acta Matrimonialia* – matrimonial cases for the declaration of invalidity.

(7) DEPOSITI – this section containing documents related to the general administration is divided into three subsections:

(A) the *Depositaria* – deposits of money made by administrators of ecclesiastical property for safe custody (1604-1848);

(B) proceedings for the concession of long-leases (1705+);

(C) accounts, including revenues, expenses, and salaries.

(8) BENEFICI – documents and proceedings for the conferment of benefices and sacred patrimonies (16 century+).

(9) INVENTARI – lists of all sorts of objects in local churches.

(10) CAUSE DI CANONIZZAZIONE – canonical proceedings for the canonization of saintly persons from Malta.

(11) ARCHIVIVM SECRETUM – the secret archives of the Vicariate.

(12) MISCELLANEA – documents of various nature.

Three Curia sections have their own archives:

(13) AMMINISTRAZIONE MESSE – documents related to funds of pious legacies and mass intentions (1918+).

(14) REVISIONE DEI CONTI – the auditing of all ecclesiastical administrations (1829+).

(15) CASSA PIE AMMINISTRAZIONI – a sort of Church Bank (that replaced the old *Depositoria*) – in which funds pertaining to churches and ecclesiastical bodies are deposited with interest for safe custody (1848+).

Two other sections was added at a later stage:

(16) STATUS ANIMARUM – statistics on people living in parish territories (1667+).

(17) CABREI – inventory of properties including plans.

General Collection. This collection is divided into sixteen sections:

(1) CONTI – financial accounts sent to the Curia by procurators of churches, chapels, and monasteries that fell under the Bishop's jurisdiction (1600+).

(2) SCRITTURE DEL CINQUECENTO – miscellaneous documents ranging from *processi* to lists of all sorts.

(3) SUPPLICATIONES – petitions and requests made to Bishops and Vicar Generals (1602 to 1960); *parallel fond: Curia Collection, section (2)*.

(4) PATRIMONIA SAGRA – documentation relative to the foundation and/or acquisition of Sacred Patrimonies by candidates to the priesthood (1618-1877).

(5) MISCELLANEA – with six subsections:

(A) *patrimonia* and *professiones* of nuns;

(B) *inventaria* drawn up during pastoral visitations

(C) *quaesiones* or *causae* referred to Rome

(D) parchments

(E) *edictorum supplementum*, papers related to edicts

(F) lists of curial *alarii* and *servientes* and their privileges.

(6) ACTA ET PROCESSUS – documents of a judiciary character (19 cent).

(7) CORRISPONDENZA E RESCRITTI – correspondence sent by or to the bishops of Malta; *parallel fond: Secretariat Collection, section (4)*.

(8) ARTE SAGRA – petitions and records related to all sort of church embellishment.

(9) FACULTATES ET LICENTIAE – permission of all sorts granted to priests.

(10) PROPRIETÀ – papers with maps and sketches of lands compiled for ascertaining their value.

(11) DIMISSORIAE – dimissorial letters; *parallel fond: Secretariat Collection, section (9)*.

(12) INFORMAZIONIES – documents employed in court proceedings (17 cent+)

(13) MANDATA – instructions given by Vicar Generals (17 cent +).

(14) BASTARDELLA ACTORUM CIVILIUM – notes or minutes of Curia officials related to the fond *Atti Civili* in the *Curia Collection, section (1)*.

(15) STATI LIBERI – attestations and certificates establishing the freedom to marry (1573-1891).

(16) MATRIMONIA MISCELLANEA – all sorts of documents related to marriage (1715+); *parallel fond: Curia Collection, section (5)*.

Services. The consultation of archival material *in situ* is free for all users. The AAM offers both photocopies as well as digital image reproduction of manuscripts for study purposes.

Online services. The AAM, in an ongoing project under the able direction of Reverend Vic-George Vassallo, the IT coordinator of the Diocese, is digitalizing its enormous holdings⁸. It even went one step further and is also digitalizing holdings of other ecclesiastical entities, including a number of parishes.

On 7 November 2012, the AAM launched its website at:

<http://archives.maltadiocese.org/>

with tens of thousands of images from its own collection and from that of the parishes uploaded online. These include, among others, documents related to pastoral visits, benefices, correspondence with the Holy See, and the *Cabrei*. The parish records include baptism, marriage, and death registrations, some beginning as early as 1555 – records that are always on demand in drawing genealogical tables.

This data has thus become accessible to researchers from all over the world. One can either search in the Catalogues Section or through

⁸ VICGEORGE VASSALLO, *From microfilms to digital media* (2013) (online): <http://archives.maltadiocese.org/>

a General Search. The search engine and database is being continuously refined.

Registration on the site is free and one can also freely browse through the documents. As they are in low resolution, downloading time is minimal. For optimal resolution, manuscript pages can be downloaded as if one is printing them at a fee of €0.50 per page (of which €0.47 go to PayPal). It is important to note that, to place orders, one is to insert the number on the manuscript *flipper* and not that on the manuscript folio. These images are printable. One can download fifty folios at a time.

The material available is of an ecclesiastical and historical interest and is conducive to a greater appreciation of the cultural heritage of Malta.

INFO: The AAM is within walking distance of Valletta and the main bus terminus:

Archbishop's Curia • 6 Pjazza San Kalkidonju • Floriana. FRN 1535. Malta.

TEL: (356) 2124-5350

WEBPAGE: <http://archives.maltadiocese.org/>

EMAIL: info@maltadiocese.org

OPENS: Monday–Saturday (except Thursday) • 9.00am–12.00pm

2 . ACM – ARCHIVUM CATHEDRALIS MELITENSE

The invaluable ACM – *Archivum Cathedrale Melitense* – preserves the earliest written documentation in Malta. It is located in Mdina, the former capital city of Malta, also referred to as *Città Notabile*. Its holdings date from the eleventh to the twenty-first century.

The Cathedral Archives officially opened its doors for researchers in January 1968. This became possible due to the incessant efforts of Monsignor Edward Coleiro (1914-1996) and the indefatigable Canon John Azzopardi, who from October 1967 onwards patiently and professionally organised the collection making it accessible to the clergy, to academics, and to University students⁹. The manuscripts revealed a hitherto hidden mine of information on Maltese ecclesiastical, social, and cultural heritage.

The holdings of the ACM amalgamate together three major formerly distinct archives and a fourth collection made of up three other minor archives.

⁹ J. AZZOPARDI, *Hand-list of the Episcopal and Provicarial Archives at the Malta Cathedral Museum*, Collegeville/MN 1975.

ACM – *Archivum Cathedrale Melitense*

The ACM proper is made up of the documentation created by the Cathedral Chapter of Malta as well as other material that accumulated in its archives over half a millennium. This includes the largest collection of music scores by Maltese composers in the Maltese Islands.

Canon John Azzopardi, the archivist between October 1967 and June 2002, arranged the ACM into three collections, each of which is in turn divided into several sections and, sometimes, subsections¹⁰.

ACM – Historic Collection

(10 sections)

- (1) Acta Reverendissimi Capituli
- (2) Exemplar actuum capitularium
- (3) Fondo Panzavecchia
- (4) Minute capitolari
- (5) Miscellanea Notitiarum
- (6) Registrum deliberationum capitularium
- (7) Repertorium actorum capitularium
- (8) Ricorsi
- (9) Codices
- (10) Printed works

ACM – Administration Collection

(19 sections)

ACM – Musical Collection

(15 sections)

Section 1 has Choral Books dating from the twelfth to the seventeenth century; while section 8 preserves the largest collection in Malta of music scores by Maltese composers.

CEM – *Curia Episcopalis Melitensis*

The CEM archives amalgamates documents from two formerly distinct Curiae:

- the *Curia Provicariale Civitatis Notabilis*, that had limited jurisdiction over districts lying close to Mdina, the former capital city of Malta; and
- the *Curia Episcopalis Civitatis Notabilis*, documents generated by the Bishop's Curia functioning from Mdina; together with documents generated by the *Magna Curia Civitatis Vallettae*, when the Curia was transferred from Mdina to Valletta. The documents from the

¹⁰ The following is based on J. AZZOPARDI, *A microfilm project by the Benedictines of Minnesota for Malta*, in *Guardians of Memory, essays in remembrance of Hella Jean Bartolo-Winston*, edited by Charles Farrugia, Rabat/Malta 2008, 376-380.

Valletta Curia consisted of thousands of unsorted volumes and manuscripts that were stored in the basement of the Archbishop's Palace, Valletta. Soon after the opening of the Cathedral Archives in 1968, Archbishop Michael Gonzi decreed the transfer of this mass to the Cathedral Archives for classification and retention. Miscellaneous papers proceeding from both Curiae were classified in the section *Acta Originalia*; it consists of a treasure of documents that throw a lot of light on the late medieval history of Malta and beyond. The amalgamated documents are divided into 26 sections:

- (1) Acta Originalia
- (2) Bastardella *sive* Protocollo Actorum Curiae
- (3) Conti originali
- (4) Citationes
- (5) Concursus
- (6) Indice de' conti originali
- (7) Mandati della Curia Provicariale
- (8) Registrum actorum civilium
- (9) Registrum actorum criminalium
- (10) Registrum litterarum monitorialium
- (11) Registrum ordinandorum
- (12) Registrum cedularum depositorum
- (13) Registrum supplicationum
- (14) Registrum insinuationis donationum
- (15) Registrum sententiarum
- (16) Registrum decisionum Curiae Episcopalis Civitatis Notabilis
- (17) Registrum sententiarum ac possessionum prebendarum et canonicatum
- (18) Registrum citationum
- (19) Libro de carcerati per la Corte Vescovile della Città Notabile
- (20) Repertorium giuliana de' processi
- (21) Repertorium supplicationum
- (22) Repertorium actorum Curiae
- (23) Repertorium cedularum depositorum
- (24) Repertorium subastationum
- (25) Repertorium mandatorum
- (26) Status Animarum

AIM – *Archivum Inquisitionis Melitensis*

The AIM archives amalgamates documents from two formerly distinct entities:

- the *Archivum Inquisitionis Melitensis*, the archives of the

Tribunal of the Holy Roman Inquisition at Malta. It must be noted that the Inquisitor was also the Apostolic Delegate representing the Holy See in Malta; and

- the *Archivum Reverenda Fabrica Sancti Petri*, an entity established throughout Catholic Europe to gather funds for the building of Saint Peter in Rome. This archives reflects its activity in Malta from 1628 to 1796.

The AIM is divided accordingly into two collections and each collection is in turn divided into several sections:

AIM – Inquisitor Collection

The collection is divided into 12 sections:

- (1) Acta civilia
- (2) Computa depositarii Tribunalis Sancti Officii
- (3) Corrispondenza
- (4) Memorie lasciate dagl'Inquisitori di Malta
- (5) Miscellanea
- (6) Processi e dununzie
- (7) Registrum actorum civilium Sancti Officii Sanctissime Inquisitionis Melitensis
- (8) Registrum Brevium Apostolicorum ac Decretorum Congregationum
- (9) Registrum litterarum patentium
- (10) Registrum sententiarum causarum civilium Sanctissime Inquisitionis
- (11) Repertoria
- (12) Registrum depositorum causarum civilium

AIM-RF – Reverenda Fabrica Collection

(9 sections)

Minor archives

AVA – *Archivio della Veneranda Assemblea dei Cappellani Conventuali* – the archives of the assembly of the Conventual Chaplains of the Order of Malta, formerly stored in the Conventual Church of Saint John, Valletta

(5 sections)

ASC – *Archivio dei Spogli*, archives made up of miscellaneous *Spogli* or written material bequeathed by Knights of the Order of Malta. One section, placed here for expediency, is made up of *Lettere Consolari*, letters addressed to the French consul in Malta; these were mixed up with documents belonging to the AIM

(3 sections); and

AGV – *Archivio del Collegio dei Gesuiti*, Valletta, the archives

that belonged to the Jesuits' *Collegium Melitense*, before the Order's suppression (1769); formerly stored in the Conventual Church of Saint John, Valletta (1 section).

The ACM also houses a small reference library. This includes books, theses, and miscellaneous papers related to the holdings; a sub-section on the history of art in Malta; and the papers of artist Anton Agius (1933-2008). For many years, the ACM had a restoration laboratory for the conservation of manuscripts, prints, etchings, engravings, and all other archival material. Unfortunately, it has now been dismantled.

The reward reaped from the opening of the ACM to researchers was unprecedented. It led to a host of academic publications and researched works that provided a better appreciation and, in many cases corrections, to the history of Malta and its Church. The peer reviews of these works interested scholars in both Europe and the United States of America.

The holdings attracted the attention of HMML – *The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library* – a non-profit organization located at and sponsored by Saint John's Benedictine Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota. HMML was founded in 1965 with the specific mission to identify, photograph, catalogue, and archive the contents of manuscripts belonging to threatened communities and to make the copies available to users around the world through online catalogues¹¹.

HMML started microfilming the archival collections of the Cathedral Archives in 1973 under the direction of Canon John Azzopardi¹². The filming was concluded in 1989 after 8,229 volumes had been filmed. This latter figure also includes books, music manuscripts, and archival materials from other ecclesiastical institutions. These included the Episcopal Archives of Gozo, religious Orders, parishes, and even some private collections. The contents of the filmed documents date from the eleventh to the twentieth century.

One copy of the microfilms was preserved by HMML, another at the ACM in Malta. It was however found out that the island's hot and humid climate shortened the shelf life of the earlier microfilms and some deteriorated beyond repair. In 2008, the Archdiocese of Malta

¹¹ TH. M. VANN, *The Malta Study Center (1995-2007)*, in *Guardians of Memory*, 343-352.

¹² J. AZZOPARDI, *A microfilm project by the Benedictines of Minnesota for Malta*, in *Guardians of Memory*, 353-390.

started the transfer of the microfilm images into digital media to make them available online.

Services. Since 2004, the archives is run by Mario Gauci. The consultation of archival material *in situ* is free to all users. The ACM offers a photocopy and a digital image service of manuscripts for study purposes. Pre-nineteenth century manuscripts can only be provided in digital format. Tariffs and royalty fees are applicable to those interested in performing from music scores held the Archives or to publish scores¹³. Further information can be obtained from its site:

<http://www.mdinacathedral.com/archives/information/info.htm>

Online services. The ACM has no uploaded images online for the time being. However, a guide to its holdings are available at HMML. It is helpful to visit the site:

<http://www.hmml.org/malta-study-center.html>

and then search their OLIVER database using individual words, parts of words, or combinations of words. This option searches across the entire manuscript description. The actual contents are not uploaded, but it is possible to order full items or part of them (if one knows exactly the folios needed) in digital format against a small payment (presently, \$0.35 per image). HMML is bound to obtain prior permission from the original depository before providing copies of entire items.

INFO: The ACM is situated close to the Mdina Cathedral at Ange's Palace • 11 Triq Villagaignon • Mdina. MDN 1193. Malta.

TEL: (356) 2145-0303

WEBPAGE: <http://www.mdinacathedral.com/archives/information/info.htm>

EMAIL: cathedralarchives@nextweb.net.mt

OPENS: Monday–Saturday • 9.30am–12.30pm

3. AEG – ARCHIVUM EPISCOPALE GAUDISIENSE

The AEG – *Episcopal Archives of Gozo* – is the main Church archives in Gozo, the second largest island of the Maltese archipelago.

¹³ M. GAUCI, *The Cathedral Archives* (2013) (online): <http://www.mdinacathedral.com/archives/information/info.htm>

There are other minor archives on the island, foremost among them the Gozo Cathedral Archives¹⁴.

The history of the Church in Gozo runs parallel to that of Malta. The island possibly had a Bishopric in early medieval times as a diocese of Gozo is mentioned by George of Cyprus in his *Descriptio Orbis Romani* of around 604-606. A bishop in Gozo is again mentioned in 1127, when Roger II took the archipelago from the Arabs and instituted Norman rule. At a time when the majority of Christians lived in Gozo, this Bishopric might have embraced both Gozo and Malta. In 1249, Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen expelled the Muslims from Malta and Sicily. As a result, the Christian majority shifted from Gozo to Malta and so did the Bishopric¹⁵. Gozo remained part of the diocese of Malta until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The priests and the people of Gozo had long felt the necessity of a bishop closer home. On 16 September 1864, Pope Pius IX conceded to their supplications and, through the Bull *Singulari Amore*, he created Gozo with the island of Comino as a separate diocese directly subjected to the Holy See. An Episcopal Curia was set up immediately¹⁶.

The Curia took over the archives belonging to the Provicar of Gozo and continued to build upon it. The archives was kept rather haphazardly until 1967, when Daniel Glavina (1902-1994), a Jesuit, aided by Canon Louis Camilleri (1938-2001), started to organize the holdings. It was catalogued on modern lines from 1979 onwards by Reverend Joseph Bezzina; appointed archivist of the Diocese of Gozo in October 1985.

The archives must have been set up sometime in the fifteenth century when the Gozo Church became a *Proviariate*. However any documents produced in early times, perished in 1551, when Gozo was attacked by the Turks and devastated. The earliest record dates to 1554.

The AEG – *Archivum Episcopale Gaudisiense* – is located in Victoria, the capital city of Gozo. It has two collections divided into 50 sequentially numbered sections. The first collection, Sections 1-15 gathers the documents mainly created by the *Curia Provicariale Insulae Gaudisii*; the second, sections 16 to 50, has the documents of

¹⁴ For the most important archives at Gozo-Malta, see J. BEZZINA, *The major archives at Gozo*, in *Guardians of Memory*, 35-50; see also N. D'ANASTAS, *The Music Archives at the Gozo Cathedral*, in *Guardians of Memory*, 51-73.

¹⁵ S. FIORINI, *Tristia ex Melitogaudio revisited. Objections, clarifications, confirmations*, Malta 2010.

¹⁶ J. BEZZINA, *The Bishop's Archives, Gozo – a descriptive hand-list* (= Gaulitana 12), Victoria/Gozo 1992.

the *Curia Episcopalis*. The following hand-list provides a synthesis of its holdings.

• *Curia Provicariale Insulae Gaudisii*

Documents redacted by the Provicariate

(1) AO ACTA ORIGINALIA – beginning 3 January 1561, is by far the most important section of the Archives with very extensive contents and immense social importance; including all sorts of ecclesiastical transactions related to the Church establishment in Gozo.

(2) BA BASTARDELLA – also known as *Protocollo Actorum Originalium*, contains the notes or minutes of Curia officials eventually elaborated in a full document.

(3) SU SUPPLICATIONES – a single volume with original petitions presented to the provicar and decided by him; if referred to the Bishop the petitions are with the *Suppliche* at the AAM.

(4) CO CONTI ORIGINALI – volumes with detailed accounts of the administration of churches, rural chapels, confraternities, and other ecclesiastical institutions falling under the Provicar's jurisdiction; they shed important light on the religious, artistic, social, and economic history of Gozo.

(5) MA MANDATI – decrees issued by the Provicar at the request of procurators of ecclesiastical entities authorizing payments.

Registers with transcripts, excerpts, or brief summaries of the originals

(6) RA REGISTRUM ACTORUM CIVILIU – a list of decrees and provisions taken by Curia officials regarding pious foundations, ecclesiastical appointments, authorizations, and so forth.

(7) RB REGISTRUM ACTORUM CRIMINALIU – two registers with summaries of law suits brought in front of the Provicar and decided by him; other documents related to law suits decided by the civil Courts.

(8) RC REGISTRUM CAEDULARUM DEPOSITORUM – all forms of money transactions, especially deposits, that took place at the Provicarial Curia.

(9) RD REGISTRUM SUPPLICATIONUM – two registers with transcripts of petitions made by the Provicar before forwarding the originals to the bishop at Malta.

(10) RE REGISTRUM SENTENTIARUM – proceedings together with the sentence delivered by the Provicar in court to persons that fell within his sphere of jurisdiction. All sorts of matters were judged: from the theft of a donkey, to a fight in a vestry, to swearing in public.

(11) RF REGISTRUM DECISIONUM – decisions taken in their majority, but not exclusively, by the Provicar in matters pertaining to rents,

emphyteusis, debts, mass legacies, and other problems of a financial nature.

(12) RG REGISTRUM CITATIONUM – a single register containing copies of summons issued by the Provicar obliging the parties to an action to appear before the Provicarial court.

(13) RH REGISTRUM SUBSTATIONUM – a single register with decrees issued by the Provicar authorizing persons to sell articles by auction so as to raise money to pay debts or to carry out urgent work

(14) RI REGISTRUM CALENDATIONUM MISSARUM – registers with signatures of priests saying masses in fulfilment of obligations laid down in legacies; some with notes on the foundation of the same legacies.

(15) RJ REPERTORIA – incomplete indexes to some sections of the *Curia Provicariale*; they bear witness to the loss, dispersion, and displacement of documents throughout the centuries.

• *Curia Episcopalis*

Records related to the diocese in general

(16) RS RESCRIPTA SANCTAE SEDIS – requests to Sacred Congregation of the Roman Curia and eventual rescripts, or formal, written replies, granted to ecclesiastical entities and individuals in Gozo from the establishment of the diocese onwards (1864+).

(17) ES EPISTULAE SECRETARIAE – registers starting 1863, with the correspondence from and to the bishop of Gozo, bound together irrespective of destination or origin; including also rescripts from 1930 onwards.

(18) VP VISITATIONES PASTORALES – reports drawn by bishops during pastoral visitations since 1575; the reports between 1687 and 1864 are held at the AAM.

(19) SD SINODUS DIOECESANI – a series with manuscript and printed documents relative to the Gozo synods of 1903 and 1992, as well as to the local inter-diocesan Council of 1935.

(20) AE ACTA EPISCOPORUM – a collection of the bishops' official edicts, circulars, and pastoral letters, of a religious, devotional, liturgical, social, and disciplinary character; it starts in 1864 but is incomplete.

(21) DE DECRETA EPISCOPORUM – decrees of a multiform nature issued by the Gozo Curia to ecclesiastical entities and persons in Gozo or to others but related to matters pertaining to the diocese.

(22) SS RECURSUS AD SANCTAM SEDEM – copies of petitions forwarded from Gozo to the Secretariat of State, the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, the Congregations, the Tribunals, and other Institutes of the Roman Curia; reply is many times attached. After 1950, these petitions were filed in section 17.

(23) RR RECURSUS – bound volumes of petitions forwarded to the Bishop of Gozo for the most varied reasons, such as: applications to fill vacant ecclesiastical posts; the buying and selling of Church property; the building and enlargement of churches and ecclesiastical buildings; the redemption or reduction of burdens on property; the correction of official records; the purchasing of tombs in church cemeteries; and so on and so forth.

(24) CC CONCURSUS – an incomplete series with the results of written and oral examinations held to confer certain ecclesiastical offices, such as parishes and canonical prebends; a *curriculum vitae* is sometimes attached.

(25) NN NOMINATIONES – an incomplete series of the bishops' decrees nominating persons to all sorts of ecclesiastical offices in Gozo.

(26) BB BENEFICIA – a series of files with the mandatory documentation for the attainment of benefices; including documents relative to the establishment of parishes after 1864. Previous conferment of benefices are in the relative section at the AAM.

(27) BT BONA TEMPORALIA – hundreds of files and registers with documentation relative to ecclesiastical property; produced by *Ufficio Beni Temporalis* and other offices of the administrative section of the Curia. Plans and maps are sometimes included.

(28) MD MISCELLANEA DIOECESANA – files containing documents of a varied nature that do not fall in any of the previous or following sections; including files related to the establishment of the diocese, special diocesan or religious events. Files relative to *Social Care*, *Social Communications*, *Catechism*, *Liturgy*, and other diocesan institutions, such as the Seminary, are also in this section.

(29) MH MISCELLANEA HISTORICA – files with a wide variety of documents relative to local important events that are not strictly ecclesiastical.

(30) ED EDITA DIOECESANA – a collection of all serial publications issued either by the diocese of Gozo or by diocesan institutions, but not by the parishes; including the *Acts of the Curia*, the diocesan magazine, the annual *Ordo* for liturgical celebrations, the Pastoral calendar, the Directory of the Diocese, and others.

Records related to the administration of certain sacraments

(31) CONFIRMATIONES – registers recording Confirmations, beginning 1699; recording the Bishop, the parents, the sponsors, the place, and the date.

(32) ACTA ORDINATIONUM – more than one thousand files with the

documents required by a person to be accepted at the Seminary and, eventually, to be promoted to Holy Orders.

(33) PATRIMONIA – documentation relative to the foundation and/or acquisition of Sacred Patrimonies by candidates to the priesthood; previously a stipulation prior to the conferment of the tonsure.

(34) REGESTA ORDINATIONUM – record of persons receiving Minor and Major Orders; including dimissorial letters issued to those who were promoted to the Orders abroad.

(35) ACTA MATRIMONIALIA – attestations and certificates establishing the freedom to marry and relative documentation; testimonials necessary for those who had lived abroad for some years.

(36) DISPENSATIONES MATRIMONIALES – documents relative to the relaxation of canonical impediments to marriage.

(37) PROCESSUS MATRIMONIALES – records of proceedings by the Ecclesiastical Tribunal concerning marriage questions, such as the declaration of nullity of marriage; the separation of spouses; the dispensation from a ratified and non-consummated marriage; and the presumed death of a spouse.

(38) LEGATUS MATRIMONIALES – petitions and attestations presented by couples seeking marriage legacies administered by the Church; the marriage legacy rendered an annual income destined as a dowry to poor brides.

Records related to the financial administration

(39) REVISIONE DEI CONTI – records of the Office of Audit, formerly known as *Revisione dei Conti*; its task was to examine, adjust, and certify accounts of ecclesiastical entities.

(40) CASSE PIE AMMINISTRAZIONI – records of the Office *Casse Pie Amministrazioni*, a sort of Church bank in which funds pertaining to churches and ecclesiastical bodies were deposited with interest for safe custody; the *Cassa* was also obliged to see to the fulfilment of obligations binding the deposits.

Records relative to the Cathedral Chapter and the parishes, with a sub-section for every parish in alphabetical order. A copy of the baptism, marriage, and death records of every parish started being kept at the AEG in 1918.

(41) CAPITULUM CATHEDRALIS – records relative to the Collegiate Chapter of the Gozo *Matrice*, now the Cathedral Church, first founded in the fifteenth century and again in 1623; including also *concursi* for the attainment of canonical prebends.

(42) ACTA PAROECIALIA-BAPTISMA – Baptism records; including

the earliest register preserved at the AEG, the Baptism records of the *Matrice*, starting 1554.

(43) ACTA PAROECIALIA—MATRIMONIA – Marriage records; including notes on those that were eventually declared null by the Church.

(44) ACTA PAROECIALIA—DEFUNCTI – Death records; including notes whether the person was in communion with the Church and whether he received the Viaticum.

(45) ACTA PAROECIALIA—STATUS ANIMARUM – registers of the *state of the souls*, that is of people living in the parish territory and their status within the Church.

(46) ACTA PAROECIALIA—CONSILIIUM PASTORALE – minutes of the meetings of Parish Councils forwarded periodically by the parish councils and relative documents.

(47) ACTA PAROECIALIA—MISCELLANEA – documents of a varied nature; including inventories of movable property within the Church and its offices.

(48) ACTA PAROECIALIA—EDITA – publications originating within the parishes, such as the weekly bulletin, parochial magazines, almanacs, programmes of feasts and the like.

Records related to Chapels and Confraternities

(49) CAPPELLAE – a series of files for every chapel in the diocese that is not a parish church; including dilapidated chapels and the church on Comino.

(50) CONFRATERNITATES – a series of files of former and current confraternities.

Services. The consultation of archival material *in situ* is free to all users¹⁷. The AEG offers photocopier and digital image service of manuscripts for study purposes. The Keeper of the Archives since 1985 is Joseph Bezzina, a professional archivist. Further information, including a detailed guide to its holdings, can be downloaded free from its site:

<http://www.gozodiocese.org/archives/>

Online services. The AEG has no uploaded images online. However, some holdings of the AEG are available at HMML, where it is possible to order full items or parts of them. It is helpful to visit the site:

<http://www.hmml.org/malta-study-center.html>

¹⁷ J. BEZZINA, *The Bishop's Archives Gozo* (2013) (online): <http://www.gozodiocese.org/archives/>

INFO: The AEG is centrally situated in the city of Victoria at
 The Chancery • Triq ir-Repubblika • Victoria-Gozo. vct 1013. Malta.
 TEL: (356) 2155-6661/2155-6427
 WEBPAGE: <http://www.gozodiocese.org/archives/>
 EMAIL: archives@gozodiocese.org
 OPENS: Monday–Friday (except Thursday) • 9.00am–12.00pm

4. AOM – ARCHIVES OF THE ORDER OF MALTA

The valuable AOM – *Archives of the Order of Malta* – preserves documents belonging to the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Rhodes, and Malta; the Knights of Malta. The Archives is housed within the National Library of Malta, Valletta, the capital city. The collection consists of over 7,100 archival registers and folders dating from the twelfth century up to 1798¹⁸.

The Order traces its origin to a hospice that a number of noble merchants from the Republic of Amalfi (South Italy), founded in Jerusalem around 1070 and it regards 15 July 1099, the day when Jerusalem was occupied at the end of the First Crusade, as its date of foundation. The most treasured document at the AOM is the Bull of Pope Paschal II, *Piae Postulatio Voluntatis* (15 February 1113). By virtue of this document, the pope officially recognized the existence of the new organization as a living, integral, operative, and militant part of the Roman Catholic Church and placed it under the aegis of the Holy See. The Knights running the hospice were religious, bound by the three monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The documents trace the history of the Order from their origins in Jerusalem (1099-1291), their temporary refuge at Cyprus (1291-1309), their tenure on the island of Rhodes (1310-1522), and their sovereign rule over the island of Malta (1530-1798).

The AOM is made up of two collections. The first and major collection is divided into 17 series, with the items numbered sequentially from Series 1 through Series 17¹⁹. Each series is in turn divided chronologically or by subject, depending on its nature.

¹⁸ M. CAMILLERI, *The Chancery of the Order of St John*. 'Uno delle officine più importanti del nostro Sagr'Ordine', in *Guardians of Memory*, 35-50. This essay is basic for understanding the working of some of the Knights' entities that generated the AOM.

¹⁹ See A. ZAMMIT-GABARETTA – J. MIZZI, *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in the Royal Malta Library*, 1/Archives 1-72, Malta 1964, 1-2.

(1) AOM 1-72 DONATIONES, EMPTIONES, ACQUISITIONES – including papal bulls and royal documents with some of the best charter sources for the history of the crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth century Latin East. The earliest is a charter by King Baldwin I of Jerusalem confirming the donation of property to the religious of San Salvator de Monte Tabor (1107).

(2) 73-254 LIBRI CONCILIORUM – the deliberations and decisions of the Council of the Order regarding a variety of subjects.

Series 2, 4, and 5 document the central administration of the Order and its properties in Rhodes and the Levant from the fourteenth through the early sixteenth century. These three series continue into the Malta period, which is the best represented era in the archives.

(3) 255-279 LIBRI CONCILIORUM STATUS – this section is a result of a decision in the Chapter-General of 1631 that provided for the introduction of registers which would contain the decrees and deliberations concerning the affairs of State. These volumes yield invaluable information concerning sensitive issues such as relations with the European powers, negotiations for the creation of the Russian Priory, Church-State disputes, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Malta, and the subsequent formation of the University.

(4) 280-315 SACRA CAPITULA GENERALIA – The Chapter General of the Order was vested with supreme legislative authority, but had to be sanctioned by the Pope before they became binding.

(5) 316-633 LIBRI BULLARUM – the registers of the Chancery between 1346 and 1798, recording the admissions and appointments of the knights and other matters.

(6) 634-1125 CAMERA DEL COMUN TESORO – the Treasury volumes concerning the general administration and finances of the Order. The section also includes documentation of the *Congregazione della Guerra* or Defence.

(7) 1126-1181 BOLLE PONTIFICIE – papal bulls and briefs confirming legislative and other measures enacted by the Chapters General and the Councils.

(8) 1182-1199 SUPPLICHE – a collection of petitions and memoranda submitted to the Grandmasters and the corresponding decrees (1603-1798).

(9) 1200-1648 CORRISPONDENZA – volumes of original letters from European sovereigns and from ambassadors of the Order to the European Courts, as well as outgoing letters from the Grandmasters. They reveal the relations between the Order and the European powers.

(10) 1649-1712 COSTITUZIONI – the statutes, ordinances, and privileges of the Order. Statutes were enacted in the name of the

Grandmaster and were permanent; Ordinances were issued in the name of the Chapter General and were binding till the next Chapter General; the privileges were bestowed by the Popes and other Sovereigns.

(11) 1713-1758 OSPEDALE – documents concerning the *Sacra Infermeria* or Hospital of the Order; its administration was threefold: civil, economic, and spiritual.

(12) 1759-1934 MARINA – registers concerning the administration and organization of the fleet of the Order; including records of voyages and reports of naval battles.

(13) 1935-2084 CHIESE CONVENTUALI – the administration of churches in Malta and abroad that fell under the jurisdiction of the Conventual Church of the Order and who were independent of the diocesan administration; included detailed *Ceremoniali*.

(14) 2085-2240 LANGUES – details about the composition of the eight langues of the Order, each consisting of knights, chaplains, and serving brothers.

(15) 2241-5258 TRIBUNALI DI NOBILTÀ E PROCESSI – proofs of nobility of hundreds of knights, some conventual chaplains, and serving brothers; divided according to Langue.

(16) 5259-6382 CABREI E VISITE GENERALI – descriptions of lands or territorial possessions, known as *Commanderies* and reports of visitations to oversee their administration.

(17) 6383-6576 MISCELLANEA – documents, some very important, that did not fit in the above categories or were misplaced and inserted in this section.

AOM•TREASURY MANUSCRIPTS

The second AOM archival collection, made up of the records of the Treasury of the Order of Malta (TREAS.), consists of 512 volumes divided into two series. These constitute the financial records of the Order and were formerly preserved at the Government Treasury.

TREAS A 1-188 TREASURY A – a miscellanea of documents produced both by the Order as well as by the Mdina *Università* – a sort of regional Council.

TREAS B 1-342 TREASURY B – registers, journals of income and expenditure, *Libri Esigenziali*, and *Cabrei* of several foundations.

Services. The consultation of archival material *in situ* is free to all qualified researchers. The AOM offers a digital image service of manuscripts for study purposes. The Keeper of the Archives since

1999 is Maroma Camilleri, Senior Assistant Librarian and a professional archivist²⁰.

Online services. The AOM has no uploaded images online. However, an extensive guide to the holdings, prepared by Dr Theresa M. Vann with the help of Ms Maroma Camilleri, sponsored by *The Malta Study Center*, HMML, is available at HMML:

<http://www.hmml.org/the-archives-of-the-knights-of-malta.html>

To trace volumes, one is to search their OLIVER database using individual words, parts of words, or combinations of words. This option searches across the entire manuscript description. The actual contents are not uploaded, but it is possible to order full items or part of them (if one knows exactly what folios are needed) in digital format against a small payment (presently, \$0.35 per image). Both orders for images, as well as their eventual reproduction, require the previous written consent of the AOM/Malta Libraries.

INFO: The AOM is housed within the National Library of Malta

36 Triq it-Teżorerija/Pjazza Regina • Valletta. vLT 1410. Malta.

TEL: (356) 2124-3297 / 2123-6585

WEBPAGE: <http://education.gov.mt/en/education/malta-libraries/Pages/National%20Library/Archives.aspx>

EMAIL: customercare.nlm@gov.mt

OPENS: Monday–Friday • 8.15am–17.00pm – Saturday • 8.15am–13.15pm

This overview of the most important ecclesiastical archives of Malta and Gozo is intended as a short guide to the written heritage preserved within these four institutions and will hopefully be of help to those interested in the history of the Church in the Maltese Islands.

²⁰ M. CAMILLERI, *Archives of the Order of Saint John* (2013) (online): <http://education.gov.mt/en/education/malta-libraries/Pages/National%20Library/Archives.aspx>