



## *The Military Order of the Collar of Saint Agatha of Paternò*

### **Grand Chancellor's Bulletin**

*NEW YEAR 2021*

#### *Some thoughts for the New Year...*

I remember once being told that the month of January is named after the Roman god Janus. A little research on Dr Google revealed that this is disputed – but I digress. It always seemed appropriate that it should be Janus, because Janus has two faces: one looking forward, and the other looking back. Hence the first month of the calendar year bearing his name. In January we look forward to the delight of the New Year, but we also remember what we have picked up during the previous year. To all of you and your families I send my most sincere best wishes for a Holy Christmas, certain that the Birth of Our Saviour will illuminate the road before us and that soon the time will return when we can embrace each other once more.

Do not worry! I have not embraced paganism; I would even say that an obsession with looking back on the previous year could be unhealthy. But we learn best by calling to mind the lessons that we have lived. Twenty-Two was a year fraught with difficulties, some serious and some not-so-serious. It was a year of great promise, dashed by an arrival from the East: I do not mean three kings with three gifts! In Advent I exhorted the parishioners of Newport to learn from the previous year. To take the lessons learnt and apply it to our lives for Advent and 2021. One lesson of great importance was to be grateful for what we have and chief among what we have is our Faith. Faith that has been tested, no doubt. Faith that has been nurtured, I hope.

2021 is the year of St Joseph, the Righteous, the Terror of Demons. When we forget the lessons of the past let us turn to him (Ite ad Ioseph), let us seek his intercession. St Joseph may have wobbled (cf. Matthew 1:19), but he protected the Holy Family, he is the Patron of the Universal Church, and he will never leave us to lack hope or despair.

With my prayers for the New Year,  
*Fr Robert James MOC*

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## *The History of the MOC: Part II*

As we have seen the MOC, known then as the Knights of St Agatha, was founded by King Alfonso III of Aragon in 1289, in the region of the Castle of St Agatha on the newly conquered island of Minorca in order to bind together noble knights, plus the men who served under them, to protect the island from the certain attempts of the Moors to retake it. Remember that at that time knights were only



bound to serve their king in the field of battle for a limited period, say 40 days per annum, after which they and their men would return home, abandoning any territory to conquered. The new Order was to bind them into cohesion combined with gifts of land which their men would populate, thus ensuring a continuing presence.

Over time the Christian, Aragonese hold on the island was surer, particularly after the subsequent conquest of neighboring Majorca. By and large the remaining Moors on the island converted to Christianity and got on with their lives under a different ruler. The Moors returned on piratical raids but there was, after a while, no serious threat of the island being retaken. The Knights of St Agatha had ably served their purpose but now, without ever being formally abolished, it lingered on for a while as an aristocratic tradition but inevitably fell into desuetude.

Fast forward to the 18th Century: Don Ignazio Paternò Castello Scammaca (above, 1719-1786) was possessed of fabulous wealth, an insatiable passion for history and seized of the grandeur of his noble family which he was keen to demonstrate in every way possible. Single handed he was responsible for the excavation of most of the archaeological sites we see today in and around Catania and the artefacts so discovered were housed in the legendary museum in his palace (where we dine every year), later transferred to the Castello Ursino, the home of his ancestors when they ruled Sicily from Catania.

We learn from the records of discourses which he delivered to a noble learned academy (Accademia degli Etnei) that he equipped three galleys equipped with 300 men and with sumptuous provisions and sailed to the Balearic archipelago to explore the former kingdom of his ancestors. Familiar with how his noble antecedents had played their part in the expulsion of the Moors from his home island of Sicily after centuries of occupation, in the Balearics they had founded an Order of the Collar made up of elite knights to hold the islands against the Barbarians. It is clear that he significantly bordered by Cavalleria Cape and was to commission further research but sadly died before this was delivered.

What we can say from his discourse is that in Fornells on Minorca, significantly bordered by Cavalleria Cape he visited a Franciscan convent, the missionary order used extensively by the Kings of Aragon to cement the Christian hold in conquered territories, probably the convent of Mare de Déu (above) which can be visited to this day. In the library of the convent he discovered a manuscript which indicated that one of the first Grand Inquisitors of the said Order of the Collar was a Knight of Gotador from whom descended the family of Da Eleanora di Guttadauro (= Gotador in Italian) one of the Grand Master's most significant ancestors for the establishment of his hereditary rights as Head of the House.

*To be continued...*



### *The 'Why' of my Coat of Arms*

**Blazon:** Or a psaltery Gules; on a chief wavy Azure between two open books Argent bound Or, a clarion Or

**And for a Crest:** Upon a helm with a wreath Or and Azure a dove Proper holding in its beak a conductor's baton Argent with a bulbous grip Sable mantled Azure doubled Or

**Motto:** Semper Sperabo

#### **Explanation:**

Most of my adult life has included working professionally in church music as a Choir Master and Organist. The ancient Hebraic red psaltery is a representation of how ancient worship-music was accompanied, in particular, the psalms. The wavy line with blue above it is an allusion to my first name (water, a river, St. Christopher, etc.). The three charges in the superior area of the shield reference a number of things: the Holy Trinity (from whom I often derive inspiration when crafting an organ improvisation); also, the two books represent the Liber Usualis and the Gregorian Missal (books of music for the Mass in both Latin-rite forms), and the clarion is the heraldic symbol for a pipe organ. The dove crest is a nod to Pope St. Gregory the Great who codified church music, namely Gregorian Chant. The baton in the dove's mouth symbolizes me being an orchestral conductor and director of choirs. My personal motto – *SEMPER SPERABO* – is Latin for, "I will always have hope".



*Christopher Deibert*

### *Our Heraldry Registers*

The work that is done by the officers of RACA is presented outwards mostly by letter patents for coats of arms, coat of arms on seating cards and letterheads and so on. More important is the amalgamation of information about coat of arms in LONA (the acronym in Italian for "The Golden Book of the Aragonese Nobility") which is the official register or "Armorial" of awarded or recognised coat of arms. LONA can be found at the [www.mocinfo.info](http://www.mocinfo.info) website. One important document, the "Ordinary", is also a register or index of elements which are the components of all these coats of arms). Using this it is easier to find who is using an "unknown" coat of arms (that is when someone doesn't remember to whom the coat of arms belongs) or how a specific element is already in use. In a later newsletter there will be examples on how different coat of arms use such a specific common element.



LONA is, as you can understand, the most important list that the RACA has of the awarded coat of arms. Everyone awarded a noble title (or has a title recognised by RACA) or is otherwise granted a coat of arms is listed in LONA. This means that all recognised noble titles can be found in LONA.

Please take the opportunity to visit the website and have a look at the coats of arms. Most of them are a result of many hours of work, both from interacting with the person that will be awarded the coat of arms but also in finding a good description of it in words (in heraldry called a "blazon") and then the work of actually producing a picture of the coat of arms, either by painting it on paper or by making a computer picture. The computer pictures that you can see are all bitmap pictures even if most now are made using vectorised pictures (that means that they are scalable keeping all the rounded lines and surfaces). If you have a coat of arms and want to use it as letterheads or for business cards you can contact us to get a computer version of your coat of arms.

*Anders Bager*

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## *A New Dawn...*

The dawn of a new day, full of hope, as seen from my home recently. May this be the dawn of a New Year, full of hope for us all and in which we look forward to meeting and resuming our usual activities.

A Happy New Year to you all! Let us hope to meet soon and frequently and safely!

*Stephen*

