

The Fifth Annual “International Day of Prayer for the Maltese Islands”

August 8th, 2006

When the Apostle Paul shipwrecked in Malta, he found that the “islanders showed us unusual kindness” (Acts 28:1). Today the 400,000 Maltese (pronounced MAHL-teez) welcome nearly a million visitors a year to enjoy the warm weather and the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean. This small nation (only 122 square miles) became a member of the European Union in 2004 and also maintains close ties with its North African neighbors. The people speak English and Maltese, an Arabic-based language. Over 80 percent of the Maltese regularly attend Mass, and the islands are filled with beautiful church buildings, chapels, and statues of Mary and Jesus. Although many Maltese know who Jesus is, very few have made Him their personal Savior. This year we invite you to “visit” five Maltese villages.



Marsascala- (pronounced Mar-sah-skah-la)

Marsascala lies on the southeast coast of Malta. This village, also known as "Wied Il-Ghajn" (wid-e-line), has a narrow sea inlet and was for many years the landing site for conquering nations. The population was minimal as the Maltese considered it too dangerous to live near this unprotected bay. In 1616 the Knights of Malta built the remarkable St. Thomas tower in an effort to defend the region. Today Marsascala is the fastest growing village, with a population of nearly 9298,

excluding the many tourists who visit. It is now a beautiful seaside town filled with vacation homes, dwellings and lovely villas, and is recognized as an ideal place for diving due to its calm sheltered waters. Marsascala is also known as a popular place for both Maltese and tourists to go for a "passeggiata" or long, slow walk around the waterfront. St. Anne, the traditional mother of Mary, is the patron saint of Marsascala.

Psalm 94:22- But the Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.

Pray for the people in this rapidly growing village to find their strength and refuge in the Lord, and look to Him for their salvation. Ask for Marsascala to be a great village for outreach, as Maltese and tourists sit or stroll along the waterfront. Ask for workers to bring in the harvest, and for divine appointments with people who are open to the Gospel.

Mosta- (pronounced Mos-ta)

Mosta lies in the middle of the island of Malta and is the second largest village in Malta with a rapidly growing population of around 18,700. Mosta is renowned for its large church claiming the third largest freestanding dome in the world. The church was nearly destroyed during WWII. A bomb fell through the roof while some 300 parishioners were inside, but it failed to detonate. Mary was given credit and the church is dedicated to the Assumption of Mary into heaven.



Another interesting attraction in Mosta is the 18th century Speranza Chapel near Speranza Valley. (Speranza means hope.) A legend is told that a young girl and her sisters were taking care of the family's sheep. The Turks invaded and her sisters escaped but the young girl couldn't run fast as she limped. She hid in a small cave (found under the chapel), and prayed to Mary, who immediately had a spider weave its web over the cave entrance. When the Turks came near, they noticed the web still intact and didn't search the cave. Mosta is now a bustling commercial village.

Is. 42:4- My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.

Petition for God's salvation to come to the people of Mosta. Ask that they would find their hope in Him, and not in His mother. Lift up the many Maltese who look to financial gain as a means of hope and fulfillment, and ask that they would recognize that true hope lies in Jesus Christ.

Zurrieq- (pronounced Zur-ree-uh)

Zurrieq is a beautiful seaside village on the southernmost coast of Malta. The name refers to the color blue and the dawn. Both derivations are fitting due to the blue sea and its impressive ties to early history. There is a Punic Tower still in existence from 256 BC and remainders of many Roman ruins. The Medieval Time is also very well preserved. There are numerous double churches and chapels. The people of Zurrieq are known for their competitive spirit in their two feasts. Feasts in honor of St. Catherine have been held since at least 1567, but by

the 17th century a secondary feast in honor of St. Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel began. There is even a third smaller feast in honor of St. Joseph. One of Zurrieq's most famous citizens was Pietru Pawl Saydon (1895-1971) who translated the entire Bible into Maltese, a task that took 30 years.



1 John 2:5-6- But if anyone obeys His Word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.

Thank the Lord for this ancient village and that the Bible has been translated into Maltese. Ask that Maltese would have a hunger to read the Bible for themselves and to discuss it in small groups. Most of all, ask for them to obey what they have read, not out of blind duty or in an attempt to earn their salvation, but out of love for their Savior.



Haz-Zebbug (pronounced Haz-zeh-booaj)

Haz-Zebbug is centrally located and has around 11,500 people, making it the 10th largest city in Malta. The word Zebbug means olive in Maltese, and probably refers to an olive grove that used to exist in the middle of the town. In 1380 a Sicilian named Filippo (and nicknamed "Of the Olives") donated money and land for a new church and it was dedicated to his patron saint, St. Philip of Agira. Haz-Zebbug also became known as Citta Rohan when Grand Master De Rohan ruled in 1777. The De Rohan Arch was built to commemorate their new "city" status. There are over a dozen chapels and close to a hundred street niches in Zebbug, the vast majority dedicated to Mary. They also celebrate a secondary feast dedicated to Joseph. Many famous Maltese who have shaped the course of history are from Zebbug. Some of the more famous ones include a famous sculptor, the creator of the written Maltese language, and Malta's National Poet, who wrote the National Anthem.

Isaiah 42:10- Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.

Pray that as Dun Karm Psaila gave Malta their National Anthem, soon "new songs" of praise to God will be written and sung on these islands and by all who live in them. Ask that one day soon Maltese from Zebbug will once again shape history and lead the way for a turn from religiosity to a personal, daily walk with Jesus. Rejoice that in recent months several people from Zebbug have made Jesus their Savior and are attending regular Bible studies.

Rabat, Gozo– (pronounced Ra-bot, Go-zo)

Rabat is located in the center of Gozo, only 9 miles by 5 miles long. The Citadel, an imposing fortification, rises from the center of this town. In 1551, almost all of Gozo's 6,000 residents were taken to Constantinople by the Turks. Those who survived lived inside the Citadel for some 86 years until the population had increased to 2,000 and they began to resettle the island. In 1887 the name was officially changed from Rabat, meaning suburb, to Victoria, in honor of Queen Victoria. Gozo has 40,000 residents, but only 6,000 live in Rabat. However it remains the only city on Gozo and the headquarters for almost every institution in Gozo, and most Gozitan affairs. It-Tokk, or "the Meeting Place" is the square at the foot of the hill to the Citadel. It is a market site and the major hub of the island.



Psalm 31:3- Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me.

Rejoice that God created this tiny island and its inhabitants. Pray that Gozitans will make God their rock and fortress, and listen to His Holy Spirit's call and guidance in their lives. Ask that soon Gozitans will be gathering at "the Meeting Place" to worship Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

Translation of the Maltese National Anthem, by Dun Karm Psaila- *To this sweet land, our mother, to which we owe our name, Guard her, Lord God, like always you have guarded, Remember her, which you have clothed with light. Give, Great God, intellect to whom who governs, Give mercy to the proprietor, and strength to the workman, To let us serve upright, true and faithful, a united people, Maltese, and in peace.*