

Dom Maurus Caruana O.S.B. (1867-1943): His Formative Period, His Years in Scotland And His Election to the See of Malta in 1915

The Birth and Upbringing of a Future Pastor

A complete and comprehensive biography on Mgr Maurus Caruana O.S.B., Archbishop-Bishop of Malta from 1915 to 1943 has never been published as a volume running into various chapters.¹ Various anniversaries concerning this illustrious prelate have come and gone in the past decades, namely the centenary of his priestly ordination in 1991, the centenary of his episcopal consecration in 2015, the sesquicentennial of his birth in 2017 and the eightieth anniversary of his death in 2023. Over the years, a number of articles by different authors have featured in various non-academic fora. This article seeks to focus only upon the first forty-eight years of Caruana's life, namely the period leading to the formal commencement of his long episcopate in Malta. The main focus of this work

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¹ See Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress (1800-1976)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 280, n.11. Way back in 1984, Koster stated that "a detailed biography of Mgr Caruana, who died in 1943, would supply an indispensable element in the study of Maltese political and religious developments between the wars, but unfortunately that biography has still to be written." Forty years have passed and, so far, no one has undertaken this task. Perhaps this research article may be the proverbial first stone leading to the construction of an impressive edifice.

lies on Caruana's formative years in Scotland, as well as on the events which took place between his nomination to the see of Malta in January 1915 and his solemn entry in the cathedral church at Mdina, three months later.

The quintessential emphasis on Caruana's vocation as a Benedictine monk was ably summarised by Auxiliary Bishop Emmanuel Galea (1891-1974) who delivered the oration at Caruana's funeral in 1943. Galea, who not only knew Caruana very closely but also was one of his most trusted collaborators, stated:

Elevated to episcopal dignity and arrayed in episcopal robes, he never set aside the religious spirit. And I have good reason to believe that as a monk he read excerpts of his monastic rule every day, because he always kept it near his desk and he often quoted parts of it, which he knew by heart. Moreover, as he knew that St Benedict had composed it after a very wide experience, he often consulted it in the difficulties which he encountered in the administration of the diocese. Therefore, he remained always a true religious and it was not by mere chance that besides the name of Mgr Caruana he was also commonly known among us as Dom Mauro.²

The future Dom Maurus, Luigi, was born at Strada Stretta, Floriana, Malta, on 16 November 1867,³ the youngest of three sons, his elder siblings being Francesco (1864-1943) and Alfredo (1865-1953). His parents, Enrico Caruana and Elisabetta Bonavia, were united through the sacrament of matrimony on 2 July 1863 at the church of Santa Catarina d'Italia in Valletta. Luigi was baptised on the day he was born. He was taken to the parish church of St Publius, in Floriana, and was baptised by the assistant parish priest, Rev. Emmanuel Borg. Besides the name Luigi (Aloysius), he was given the names Carlo, Giovanni, Giuseppe, Publio. His godparents were his maternal uncle, Thomas Emmanuel Bonavia, and his spouse Lorenza, who lived in Valletta.⁴

² Funeral Oration by Mgr Emmanuel Galea, Titular Bishop of Tralles, Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General of the Diocese of Malta, at the conclusion of the solemn funeral Mass of Mgr Maurus Caruana, Archbishop-Bishop of Malta, St John's Co-Cathedral, 21 December 1943. See Fabian Mangion, "From Fort Augustus Abbey to the Bishopric of Malta," *The Sunday Times of Malta* (1 February 2015): 36.

³ Malta Public Registry, Act of Birth no. 0047546. Surprisingly, the Act of Birth document does not state where Luigi Caruana was born. Some researchers hold that Caruana was born in a house (with no specified number) in Gunlayer Street (*Strada Miratore*), Floriana, while others hold that he was born in Strait Street (*Strada Stretta*), Floriana. Yet another supposition is to be considered: when Caruana was born, the family residence was possibly at 10, *Strada Seconda* (currently, *Trejjet il-Foss*), Floriana, since the place of the premature death – in official records – of his mother, on 25 January 1869, a mere fourteen months later is this latter address.

⁴ Floriana Parish Archives, *Liber Baptizatorum*, vol.3, fol.7.

Luigi and his siblings were orphaned when their mother, Elisabetta, died at the age of 27, on 25 January 1869. She died at Floriana at no. 10, Strada Seconda. Subsequently, the family moved to Senglea.⁵ It was their devout father, Enrico, who gave Luigi and his elder brothers a solid Christian upbringing. Enrico was the Assistant Secretary of the Supervising Admiral at the Shipyards in Malta. In 1876, at the age of nine, Luigi was enrolled by his father at the Sacred Heart Seminary in Gozo, then run by the Sicilian Jesuits,⁶ where he started his earliest studies. This educational institution, founded in 1866, enjoyed an excellent reputation, “so much so that, from the very beginning, not only the sons of the best families in Gozo, but also many intellectually talented boys from Malta and even from Sicily attended the Jesuit-run Seminary.”⁷ The rector at the Gozo Seminary, during the scholastic year when Luigi was a student was Rev. Giuseppe Galvagno S.J. (1814-1889).⁸

The following year, he proceeded with his studies closer home when he proceeded with his education at St Ignatius College, St Julian's, Malta, which was run by the English Jesuits.⁹ After its inauguration in 1877, St Ignatius' College soon came to the forefront as one of the leading schools in the Island. Not long after its genesis it became a boarding school. A refectory, dormitories, a gymnasium, study halls, laboratories and sports facilities were located within the magnificent building and its campus. This was the locus where the seeds of Luigi's vocation to the consecrated life were sown. Furthermore, the discipline at both the Seminary in Gozo and at St Ignatius' College moulded the young Luigi and proved to be a providential preparation for the completion of his secondary studies far from the shores of Malta.

⁵ See Joseph R. Gatt, “L-Arcisqof-Isqof ta' Malta Dom Maurus Caruana OSB – Arcisqof-Isqof Furjaniz,” *Il-Mument* (29 April 2001): 20.

⁶ See Joseph Bezzina, *The Sacred Heart Seminary. The Heart of Gozo* (Victoria/Gozo: Sacred Heart Seminary, 2016), 77-85; 89-105; Joseph Bezzina, “The Gozo Seminary. A Historical Note,” in *Sacred Heart Major Seminary. Directory 54, Formation Year 2023-2024* (Victoria/Gozo: Sacred Heart Seminary, 2023), 6.

⁷ See Bezzina, “The Gozo Seminary,” 6.

⁸ See Bezzina, *The Sacred Heart Seminary*, 240.

⁹ *Ex Alumni Societatis Iesu, Melitenses et Gaudisienses* (1935), 73. See *Malta Taghna* (6 February 1915): 2.

Caruana's Monastic Vocation

Luigi Caruana's innermost desire was to respond to the monastic vocation which he had been nurturing. In fact, in 1882, when he was only 15 years old, he was accepted to continue his secondary studies at the Abbey school at Fort Augustus, on the margins of Loch Ness, in Inverness-shire, Scotland. The Benedictine monastic community at Fort Augustus was a relatively very recent foundation. In fact, it was in 1876 – a mere six years prior to the arrival of Luigi – that the 13th Lord Lovat (Simon Fraser, 1828-1887), member of a prominent Roman Catholic family in Scotland, passed on the land to the Benedictine monks of the English Congregation whose desire was to establish a monastery in Scotland. The construction of the monastery, designed by Peter Paul Pugin (1851-1904), was quite rapid, and in August 1880, it was solemnly inaugurated, although some parts required completion. In 1882, the monastery – or rather, more precisely, St Benedict's Abbey – did not remain part of the Anglo-Britannic Benedictine Congregation, and became autonomous.¹⁰ In 1878, together with a number of Catholic lay teachers, the Benedictine monks had established a school which soon became the Fort Augustus Abbey school which in its heyday accommodated 150 students.

Luigi Caruana's stay at the school was a successful one. He was a fellow pupil of the future 14th Lord Lovat (Simon Joseph Fraser, 1871-1933) and his two younger brothers, Hugh Joseph and Alastair Thomas.¹¹ Moreover, he was chosen to be *Captain of the School*,¹² this being a sure sign of his talents and capabilities. His vocation continued to mature. On 21 March 1884, then the feast of St Benedict, he joined the Benedictine monks of Fort Augustus. On 21 September of the same year, Luigi received the Benedictine habit from the prior of the abbey, Dom Jerome Vaughan (1841-1896), and was given the name of Maurus.

He made his simple profession on 11 November 1885, while on 11 November 1888, three days short of his twenty-first birthday, he made his perpetual vows before Dom Leo Linse (1850-1910), the first Abbot of Fort Augustus. Linse, a native of Württemberg, Germany, had previously been the prior of the Beuronese monastery at Erdington, a suburb of Birmingham in the West Midlands. He

¹⁰ Pope Leo XIII, by his brief *Summa cum animi laetitia* of 12 December 1882 erected St Benedict's Abbey as an independent abbey, immediately subject to the Holy See.

¹¹ See *The Tablet* 125/3899 (30 January 1915): 140.

¹² This information was obtained by means of a note sent by Dom Andrew John-Baptist McBride O.S.B. (1913-1998) from the Abbey of St Benedict, Fort Augustus to Michael Galea. See Michael Galea, "Mons. Dom Mawru Caruana (1867-1943). Fl-Ewwel Ċentinarju ta' l-Ordinazzjoni tiegħu (1)," *Leben is-Sewwa* (24 August 1991): 8.

established a more austere way of life which was more formal than that in English Benedictine monasteries. Less than three years later, on 14 March 1891, Dom Maurus was ordained a priest by the bishop of Aberdeen, Mgr Hugh MacDonald C.S.S.R. (1841-1898). In that same year, the newly-ordained Maurus was sent to the college of Sant'Anselmo, on the Aventine Hill, Rome, to further his studies in canonical legislation, while perfecting himself in philosophical and ecclesiastical studies.

A Young Enthusiastic Benedictine Priest Engaged in Pastoral Ministry

After returning to Scotland, Dom Maurus was entrusted to teach philosophy, theology and Latin literature at the Abbey at Fort Augustus. He was especially linguistically gifted and was often invited to preach outside the abbey. He was appointed Rector of the clerics at the Abbey, counsellor and secretary of the monastic chapter. He also learned the Gaelic language.¹³ This was indeed a blessing as he was able to devote himself more intensely to pastoral work in the Scottish Highlands where he was well-loved by the scattered Catholic community at Domie in West Ross-shire.¹⁴

Not long after this initial pastoral experience, Dom Maurus assisted Rev. Andrew MacDonell O.S.B. (1870-1960), parish priest of Fort Augustus, Glengarry and Glenmoriston.¹⁵ His fluency in Gaelic was extremely providential when he himself was parish priest of the same parish between 1901 and 1905, and again, between 1912 and 1914.¹⁶ Caruana was also gifted in liturgical music.¹⁷ He was choir master. In 1912 Caruana was appointed Director of the Abbey choir. It is known that he specialised in Gregorian chant, according to the

¹³ This information, too, was obtained through the correspondence exchanged between Dom McBride O.S.B. and Michael Galea. See *ibid*.

¹⁴ See Fabian Mangion, "From Fort Augustus Abbey to the Bishopric of Malta," *The Sunday Times of Malta* (1 February 2015): 36.

¹⁵ For a detailed biographical note on MacDonell, See <https://calumimaclean.blogspot.com/2017/06/father-andrew-macdonell-mbe-mc-osb.html> [accessed, 1.4.2024].

¹⁶ The parish is still active today. See <https://stmarysbeaulieu.org/fort-augustus/history/> [accessed, 1.4.2024]. See *Malta Tagħna* no.1457 (6 February 1915): 2.

¹⁷ See *La Diocesi* 1, no.1 (1916): iv. *La Diocesi* was a diocesan publication by the Curia in Malta, and whose genesis lies in the first year of Caruana's episcopate. It ceased publication in 1921, and was succeeded in 1937 by *Lucerna*, a bulletin for the clergy.

Solesmes version. This role made Caruana renowned, and he was often asked to assist in the formation of choirs in Scotland.¹⁸

An Interlude in the Philippines?

Dom Maurus Caruana's talents were easily noticeable and it came as no surprise that on account of his intellectual and moral qualities, in 1905 he was chosen – although coming from a different Benedictine congregation – to be private secretary to Dom Ambrose Agius (1856-1911), a Maltese Benedictine monk who was appointed by the Holy See to be Apostolic Delegate in Manila, the Philippines. Born to Maltese migrant parents in Alexandria, Egypt, Agius joined the Benedictine Order in 1871 and was ordained priest in 1881. In September 1904, Pope Pius X appointed him titular archbishop of Palmyra and Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines. He was ordained bishop by Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val (1865-1930), Secretary of State. Agius died suddenly of peritonitis, in the Philippines on 12 December 1911 when he was only 55 years old.¹⁹ Most sources describe Caruana's stay in the Philippines, his pastoral ministry as chaplain to U.S. military personnel, and some daring episodes in that country.²⁰ Some researchers opine that after less than two years, possibly a span of about eighteen months, it seems that Dom Maurus was back in Scotland in his beloved monastery. Strong evidence of this short duration in the Philippines is found

¹⁸ See Galea, "Mons. Dom Mawru Caruana (1)," 8.

¹⁹ Ambrose (Tancred Alfred) Agius, born 17 September 1856, Alexandria, Egypt; entered the Benedictine Order, 8 September 1871; solemnly professed, 13 December 1873; ordained priest of the same Order, 16 October 1881; appointed titular archbishop of Palmyra, 3 September 1904; appointed Apostolic Delegate in the Philippines, 5 September 1904; ordained bishop, 18 September 1904 at the church of Sant'Ambrogio, Rome; died, 12 December 1911. It is interesting to note that Agius – a monk of Ramsgate Abbey of the Benedictine Cassinese Congregation of Primitive Observance, and for a time attached to the Abbey in Subiaco – was sent to Malta in 1881, together with the pro-visitor of the Congregation, in order to establish a Benedictine community at the priory of Santa Maria at Nigret, Żurrieq. After the departure of the monks from Malta, some years later, Dom Ambrose Agius rejoined his community at Ramsgate, until he was called to Rome in 1893, as secretary of the procurator of the Order. He is not to be confused with his namesake, Ambrose Agius (1890-1978), also a Benedictine monk, of Downside Abbey, and later at Ealing Priory.

²⁰ See Gatt, "L-Arcisqof-Isqof ta' Malta Dom Maurus Caruana OSB," 20; Galea, "Mons. Dom Mawru Caruana (1)," 8.

in the diocesan publication *La Diocesi*.²¹ It is almost certain that the contents of Caruana's short biographical note in the latter were reviewed by Caruana himself. Consequently there must be some basis to the Filipino interlude.²²

Moreover, if, as stated below, Caruana preached Lenten sermons in London in 1908, it must have been quite unlikely that he travelled all the way from the Philippines to Britain for such a task. The possible dates of what I am calling "the Filipino interlude" for Caruana would either be 1905-1906, or 1909-1911,²³ the latter being the year when the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Agius, died. Joseph Flask contends that Maurus Caruana never went to the Philippines. A great-nephew of Archbishop Ambrose Agius O.S.B. stated: "I do not think Mgr Caruana ever went to the Philippines with my great-uncle. He was appointed, but it was felt he was not suited to the job, and I think Dom Stephen Rawlinson O.S.B. went in his place."²⁴ It might also have been possible that Dom Maurus Caruana's name was confused with that of a Maltese (then, junior) member of the Holy See's diplomatic staff, Rev. George Caruana (1882-1951) who was sent to the Philippines at roughly the same time. But again, what does one make of the information about the "Filipino interlude" given both in the official publication

²¹ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 January 1915): 6; *The Tablet* (30 January 1915): 140; *Malta Taghna* (6 February 1915): 2; *La Diocesi* 1, no.1 (1916): iv; Arthur Bonnici, "Death of His Grace the Archbishop Bishop Dom Maurus Caruana O.S.B.," Supplement to *Malta Review* (21 December 1943): 2. *Malta Review* was the weekly bulletin of the Malta Information Office. See also, Editorial, *Scientia* 20, no.1 (January-March 1944): 3; A.E. Abela, *A Nation's Praise – Malta: People, Places & Events – Historical Sketches* (Malta: Progress Press, 1994), 22.

²² Indirect evidence about Caruana's stay in the Philippines was obtained by the author during a personal conversation (on 23 April 2024) with Fr Keith Bonnici, formerly a monk at Fort Augustus. Bonnici attests that in the Monastery Library, he once came across a small Hispano-Tagalog dictionary which belonged to Dom Maurus. Tagalog is the native language used in the Philippines. Readers are invited to make their own conclusions.

²³ In December 1909, Dom Maurus was certainly in Scotland, as it is documented that he was present at the priestly ordination of Dom Ambrose Geoghegan at St Benedict's Abbey, Fort Augustus, on 12 December 1909. See *The Tablet* 114/3633 (25 December 1909): 1035. Since Dom Maurus was committed to pastoral work in a parish from 1901 to 1905, and from 1912 to 1914, and was involved in preaching missions in 1908-1909, the only feasible considerable stretches when he could have been in the Far East on a mission which required prolonged residence would have been 1905-1906 and either 1909-1911 or 1909-1910.

²⁴ Personal correspondence by Joseph Flask to the author of this article (12 February 2015). Flask refers to a letter he had received in 1993 from the late Dom Dennis Agius O.S.B. where the quoted details are given. Further research shows that Dom Bernard Steven Rawlinson (1865-1952) from Downside Abbey served as an educationalist with the Benedictine Order in the Philippines. See <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/001258061213045901?journalCode=tdra> [accessed, 3.4.2024].

of the diocese of Malta, and later in the necrology of the abbey of Fort Augustus when Archbishop Caruana passed away? Moreover, how can one explain the presence of a bishop from the Philippines at Caruana's episcopal ordination in Rome in 1915?

A Fertile Preaching Ministry in Great Britain

On account of his fluency in Italian, Caruana was often asked to minister and preach to Italian migrants who left their homeland to seek work opportunities in the shipyards in Glasgow, as well as in Edinburgh. On account of his impeccable Italian pronunciation and idiom and his love of music, as well as because of his Italian-sounding surname, many Italians thought that Dom Maurus was their fellow countryman. His reputation as a fine preacher was considerable. In 1908, he delivered Lenten spiritual talks and conducted a mission at Westminster Cathedral, London.²⁵ Some days later, Dom Maurus preached on Holy Saturday at the Servite church, Fulham Road, Westminster, during the poignant ceremony of the blessing and distribution of flowers and the crowning of the statue of the Sorrowful Mother and heralding the Easter dawn.²⁶ In April of that same year, Dom Maurus was also in Rickmansworth, a town in south-western Hertfordshire, seventeen miles north-west of central London. It was reported that for the first time since the foundation of the Catholic mission in Rickmansworth a retreat was preached. During the five-day-long duration of the retreat, the congregation was deeply moved by Caruana's "earnest and eloquent discourses on the principal truths of the Catholic faith ... [and impressed by his] touching explanation on the sacrifice of the Mass."²⁷

In August 1910, Dom Maurus took part in the celebrations which took place during the consecration and opening of a church at St Andrews. On 4 August 1910, he delivered "an appropriate and eloquent sermon" as part of the solemn

²⁵ Caruana delivered Lenten sermons at Westminster Cathedral on 8, 15, 22, 29 March and 5 April 1908 at 7:00 p.m. He also conducted a mission on 15, 22 and 29 March 1908 at 8:00 p.m. This consisted in a mission service, a sermon and benediction. See *The Tablet* 111/3540 (14 March 1908): 412. See also, *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 January 1915): 6; *Malta Tagħna* (6 February 1915): 2; Abela, *A Nation's Praise*, 22. He also preached on Easter Sunday at Westminster Cathedral, 19 April 1908, after compline, benediction and devotions. This was announced in *The Tablet* 111/3544 (11 April 1908): 572, and in *The Tablet* 111/3545 (18 April 1908): 612.

²⁶ See *The Tablet* 111/3546 (25 April 1908): 663.

²⁷ *The Tablet* 111/3545 (18 April 1908): 620.

liturgical celebrations at that church.²⁸ In November 1912, Caruana was invited to preach “a triduum of prayer for the beatification in regard to the approval of the veneration of Blessed Bonaventure Tornielli,”²⁹ a fifteenth-century priest of the Order of the Servants of Mary. This triduum, held on 8 – 10 November 1912, was celebrated in the Servite Church on Fulham Road in the Archdiocese of Westminster. It was reported that

on the Friday [8 November] he spoke of the saintly Servite as one of those men raised by God to do a special work and given the ability to do it. On the Saturday [9] he treated the importance of imitating him in not only avoiding sin, but destroying it in others, and on Sunday [10] he dwelt upon the graces and glory conferred on him by heaven in reward for his co-operation with grace.³⁰

In February 1913, we encounter Dom Maurus together with his fellow monk from Fort Augustus, Dom Columba Edmonds O.S.B., an accomplished author on the early history of Christianity in Scotland, preaching a fortnight’s mission, concluded on 23 February, in Arundel, in the South Downs, West Sussex.³¹ He also preached a panegyric on St Ignatius of Loyola at the Jesuit College at Stonyhurst in Lancashire, and some thought he was English on account of his mastery of the language. He also preached in French and in Spanish. At the time of the outbreak of the First World War, Caruana was engaged in missionary outreaches in both Scotland and in England.³²

Caruana Nominated to the See of Malta

In December 1914, Caruana was preparing to travel to Brazil where he was to establish a new Benedictine monastery,³³ and thoughtfully he decided to pause for some days in Malta in order to visit his now elderly father, aged 78, and to greet his relatives. It was while he was in Malta that Dom Maurus received a telegram to suspend his journey to Latin America, and to travel to Rome.³⁴ The popular narrative which was repeated and found its way in most newspapers, journals and biographical notes on Caruana states that while he was called to Rome, he was summoned and informed that Pope Benedict XV was appointing

²⁸ *The Tablet* 116/3666 (13 August 1910): 251.

²⁹ *The Tablet* 120/3784 (16 November 1912): 776.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *The Tablet* 121/3799 (1 March 1913): 338.

³² See Abela, *A Nation’s Praise*, 22.

³³ *La Diocesi*, 1, no.1 (1916): v.

³⁴ See Mangion, “From Fort Augustus Abbey,” 36.

him to the see of Malta and to the titular see of Rhodes *in partibus infidelium*. The news was announced by the Holy See on 22 January 1915, the liturgical *memoria* of St Publius, one of the patron saints of Malta, thus adding colour to the narrative. The Holy See was probably oblivious of this liturgical feast, particular to the liturgical calendar used in Malta. Moreover, contrary to what has been repeatedly reasserted, Caruana was indeed in Malta when he received a telegram from the Holy See.³⁵

³⁵ The anecdote is that Caruana first received a telegram, while in Malta, telling him “Don’t move,” followed by another telegram stating “*Proceed to Rome*.” See Galea, “Mons. Dom Mawru Caruana (I),” 8. Again, there are conflicting versions on the sequence of events. While some researchers state that Caruana first went to Rome where he was informed about his nomination to the see of Malta, a nomination which was made public on 22 January 1915 (all available sources agree upon this date), the newspaper *Malta Taghna* provides readers with a slightly different version of events which is more plausible. This newspaper (6 February 1915, p.2) reports that on Thursday, 28 January 1915, Dom Maurus Caruana left Malta aboard the ship *Birmania* for Rome (“*telak għall Ruma, fejn ser ikun icconsagrat.*”) The text, reproduced here in the pre-1930s Maltese orthography, is stating that Caruana departed for Rome after his nomination was announced. *Malta Taghna* is the only source which provides us with the name of the ship for the journey to Rome. This shows that the anecdotal “Don’t move,” followed by “Proceed to Rome” in two separate telegrams has been often misinterpreted by certain researchers.

What was reported in *Malta Taghna* had been previously disclosed in what was the then most important newspaper in the Maltese Islands, *The Daily Malta Chronicle*. It is clear from the latter that the nomination to the see of Malta was made on Friday 22 January. Dom Maurus received a telegram on his nomination on the following day, Saturday 23 January. This is the text of the newspaper: “A telegram received by a high church dignitary in the island from Rome on Friday evening last [22 January] announced that the Very Reverend Father Dom Maurus Caruana, O.S.B., of Fort Augustus Monastery, Scotland, has been ‘elected bishop.’ No further details were received, although it was freely rumoured that Father Caruana had been appointed to succeed the late Mgr Pace as Bishop of Malta and Archbishop of Rhodes. On Saturday evening Father Caruana himself received telegraphic information of his appointment as Bishop, from His Eminence Cardinal Gasquet, who congratulated him and asked him to be his guest while at Rome.

‘Father Caruana arrived about a month ago on a visit to his family, prior to proceeding on an important mission to Brazil. Last week he received instructions from the Vatican to await orders at Malta, the reason for which is now revealed.’

‘Father Caruana will leave today [26 January] for Rome, where he will be consecrated, and is expected to return in a month’s time to assume the administration of the diocese as Bishop of Malta and Archbishop of Rhodes.’” (*The Daily Malta Chronicle* [Tuesday 26 January 1915]: 7. Here, one observes a different date for the departure for Rome from that reported later in *Malta Taghna*.

In the subsequent issue of *The Daily Malta Chronicle*, similar information concerning the telegraphic instructions received by Dom Maurus was reiterated. The paper reports that “several dignitaries of our Church have been mentioned as his [Pace’s] likely successors; and, of course,

The Daily Malta Chronicle sought to interpret the delay in appointing a successor to the late Archbishop-Bishop Pietro Pace who died on 29 July 1914. The events of the earliest phase of the First World War could have affected the preliminary consultation regarding the appointment of new bishops. Reference was also made, in this newspaper, to the Simmons-Rampolla Agreement in 1890 between Great Britain and the Holy See which included the procedure to be followed in the nomination of the bishops of Malta and Gozo.³⁶ Briefly, this stipulated that the British Government was to be informed about the possible nomination of a bishop in the Maltese Islands. Historians and researchers have unearthed evidence which shows that there were instances when the nomination of a priest to the episcopate was either blocked by the colonial authorities or put on a back-burner because he happened to be a Francophile, or later because of pro-Italian sympathies.³⁷

Father Caruana's name was in the list. When, as stated in our last issue, that reverend gentleman, who is at Malta on a visit to his family, received telegraphic instructions from the Vatican last week not to proceed to Brazil but to await orders in Malta, the rumour went about that his appointment to the See was merely a question of time" (27 January 1915): 6.

Further proof concerning the actual sequence of events is derived from Reuter's. In fact, a few days later, the same daily paper reported: "From our Reuter's Postal Service we learn that Reuter's Correspondent in Rome telegraphed on the 22 January last to London that 'the Pope had appointed Mgr Caruana, of the Benedictine Order, to be Archbishop of Malta.' Evidently, Reuter's omitted to wire the news to Malta believing that it was already known here." (*The Daily Malta Chronicle* [1 February 1915]: 6). As stated above, Caruana was actually in Malta and while expecting new instructions received word about his appointment to the Maltese See.

³⁶ The possibility of future conflict on the nomination of bishops to the dioceses of Malta and Gozo became very remote on account of the positive results of the amicable negotiations carried out between a representative of the British Government, a former Governor in Malta, Sir John Lintorn Simmons (1821-1903) and the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro (1843-1913). In a nutshell, the agreement stipulated that when the Pope was in the process of nominating a bishop to one of the two sees in question, the Papal Secretary of State would communicate with the British Government about the person to be nominated. See Arthur Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta* (Malta: Veritas Press, 1975), 3:13-14; *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 January 1915): 6.

³⁷ The Capuchin Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Malta, Bishop Antonio Buhagiar, had his nomination in 1889 to the see of Malta "blocked" because he openly nurtured French sympathies. Later, when a successor was being sought to Archbishop Maurus Caruana who in the late 1930s and early 1940s was often in ill health and contemplating a return to Fort Augustus, the British authorities were initially averse to the appointment of Mgr Michael Gonzi, Bishop of Gozo, to the See of Malta, on account of what a section of the population considered to be his pro-Italian sympathies, particularly after the politico-religious dispute with Lord Gerald Strickland, leader of the pro-British Constitutionalist Party in Malta. The opposition to Mgr Gonzi waned after the latter collaborated with the Governor of Malta and the local colonial

While it was rumoured that he was being considered to be appointed to one of the dioceses in Scotland or to be made abbot of Fort Augustus, it is deemed highly probable that Caruana was recommended, and his name presented by Cardinal Francis Aiden Gasquet (1846-1929), former Abbot of Downside, President of the English Benedictine Congregation and member of the Consistorial Congregation.³⁸ Caruana's name was among those who were being mentioned as possible successors of the late Mgr Pietro Pace, Archbishop-Bishop of Malta.³⁹ Caruana was already in good standing vis-à-vis the Holy See, as well as with the British colonial authorities in Malta. These factors contributed to his eventual appointment to the see of Malta. Adrianus Koster (1945-) states that a section of the population referred to Caruana "as an Anglophile who had no choice but to oppose [prime minister and leader of the pro-British Constitutionalist Party] Lord Strickland because the latter went against the authority of the Church."⁴⁰ After briefly describing his personality and style, Koster explains that "the British were later to find out that the appointment of this apparently pro-British prelate failed to guarantee smooth Church-State relations."⁴¹ Unfortunately, the dispute between the Church and the State in the late 1920s and early 1930s festered,⁴² and would re-erupt (in different contexts and for different reasons) between the mid-1950s and 1969, and in the period 1977-1987.

It is interesting to observe the contents of the evaluation made in 1929 by Mgr Paschal (David) Robinson O.F.M. (1870-1948), titular Archbishop of Tyana and an Irish ecclesiastical diplomat, whom the Holy See sent as an envoy to judge the simmering situation in Malta. He describes Mgr Caruana as an exemplary monk who was very well-educated and who exercised a great deal of self-discipline. While noting the different mentality characterising Caruana,

authorities when – in the context of the Second World War – he was instrumental in successfully persuading farmers and millers in Gozo to forfeit their extra supplies of grain or flour in favour of the population in the larger island of Malta which was on the brink of starvation in the first eight months of 1942.

³⁸ See Joseph Flask, "Appreciation: Dom Denis Agius O.S.B.," *The Sunday Times* [of Malta] (6 October 1996): 46. Here, Flask writes: "In one of his letters, Dom Denis told me that Archbishop Gonzi had told him that 'it was Cardinal Gasquet who advised the Pope to appoint Archbishop Maurus Caruana O.S.B. to Malta (in 1915).'"

³⁹ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 January 1915): 6.

⁴⁰ Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta*, 83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See Max Farrugia, *Enrico Dandria. Qassis, Politiku, Patrijott* (Malta: Kite, 2017), 81-171, esp. 94-96; Joe Calleja, *Ugo P. Mifsud (1889-1942). Prim Ministru u Patrijott* (Malta: Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza, 1997), 163-179; Abela, *A Nation's Praise*, 23-24.

Robinson criticises the negative attitudes shown by members of the Cathedral Chapter, together with their bickering and resistance to what Caruana sought to implement. Robinson described the archbishop of Malta as a very conscientious person who showed magnanimity and nobility of character even towards those who consistently put the proverbial spokes in his wheel.⁴³ Caruana's personality and general demeanour were described by Sir Charles Bonham Carter (1936-1940), British Governor of Malta in his personal diaries, as erudite and charming, while not sparing some negative features about him. On 20 April 1936, barely four weeks after his arrival in Malta, Bonham Carter writes:

I have also paid a visit to Archbishop Caruana – a charming man who was for many years at Fort Augustus. He is a kindly soul (a Benedictine monk of course) and very friendly, but I am told a weak character and past files bear this out. For he appears to be dominated by some violently pro-Italian advisers.⁴⁴

On the other hand, the English Catholic weekly *The Tablet* had fine words on Caruana after his appointment to the see of Malta:

With the exception of a period spent in the Philippines as secretary to the late Archbishop Agius, Dom Maurus' priestly activities have been chiefly confined to Scotland, where he is well known as a zealous and successful missionary. He has the reputation of a sound scholar and theologian, an accomplished linguist and a fine musician, and his gifts as a preacher are of an exceptionally high order, as those can testify who have heard him at Westminster Cathedral and elsewhere.⁴⁵

Episcopal Consecration

Mgr Maurus Caruana was consecrated bishop on 10 February 1915, feast of the Shipwreck of St Paul in Malta, and also the liturgical *memoria* of St Scholastica, sister of St Benedict.⁴⁶ Although the decision about the date of the episcopal consecration had been made known, prudence seemed to have dictated that the Cathedral Chapter be formally informed. This was done by means of a

⁴³ Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), *Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Inghilterra Posizione* 209, fascicoli 41 [known as the Mgr Paschal Robinson Report, 17 July 1929], referred to extensively in Farrugia, *Enrico Dandria*, 158-159.

⁴⁴ John Manduca, ed., *The Bonham Carter Diaries 1936-1940* (Malta: PEG, 2004), 67. See also, *ibid.*, 38, 59, 84.

⁴⁵ *The Tablet* (30 January 1915): 140. This text was reproduced verbatim (with the source being acknowledged) in *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (9 February 1915): 3.

⁴⁶ See Abela, *A Nation's Praise*, 22.

telegram (in French) from Rome, a copy of which is to be found at the Cathedral Archives in Mdina.⁴⁷

The solemn liturgy which commenced at 8:30 a.m. took place in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome. Mgr Carinci and Mgr Tani, the pontifical masters of ceremonies, supervised the solemn liturgy.⁴⁸ On the same day, in Malta, a festive ringing of church bells at 10:00am announced the ordination of the new bishop.⁴⁹ Caruana was ordained by Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val (1865-1930), Secretary of the Congregation of the Holy Office, and formerly Secretary of State to Pope Pius X. The two co-consecrators were Mgr Algernon Charles Stanley (1843-1928), titular bishop of Emmaus, and Mgr John McIntyre (1855-1935), titular bishop of Lamus and Rector of the Venerable English College, Rome.

The choir of the Pontifical Scots' College in Rome,⁵⁰ then at its premises on Via delle Quattro Fontane, participated in the solemn liturgy. Among the guests present at Mgr Caruana's consecration, one is bound to mention the following: Enrico, his father; Sir Henry Howard (1843-1921), the British envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Holy See,⁵¹ accompanied by the members of the legation, Messrs Gregory and Wilson;⁵² Mgr Giuseppe Petrelli (1873-1962), Bishop of Lipa in the Philippines whom Caruana had acquainted during his stay in the Philippines;⁵³ Mgr Pietro La Fontaine (1860-1935), the newly-

⁴⁷ See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 31. The telegram was received through the Eastern Telegraph Company Limited at the Malta Station on 3 February 1915, and was addressed to the Dean of the Cathedral Chapter, Mgr Vincenzo Vassallo at Malta, Notabile. The content was: "Consecration dix fevrier Eveque Caruana."

⁴⁸ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 February 1915): 6.

⁴⁹ See AAM, *Floriana*, Editi, vol.36: *Editi di Mgr Fr[a] Angelo Portelli O.P., Amministratore Apostolico di Malta Sede Vacante dall'8 agosto 1914 al 22 Febbrajo 1915*, [Lettera] Circolare (9 February 1915), fol.26. This Circular Letter was signed by Can. Luigi Attard, the then Vicar General.

⁵⁰ The Pontifical Scots' College (*Pontificium Collegium Scotorum de urbe*) was founded in 1600 by Pope Clement VIII in order to prepare priests for the Scottish mission during the two centuries when Roman Catholics were persecuted in Scotland.

⁵¹ Sir Henry Howard was the first formal British envoy to the Holy See in over three centuries.

⁵² See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 February 1915): 6.

⁵³ Mgr. Petrelli was described as "companion to Caruana when both belonged to the Apostolic Delegation of the Philippines" (*The Daily Malta Chronicle* [27 February 1915]: 6). See Alfons M. Galea, *L'Iskofta Malta* [= Corba tal Moghdija taz-Zmien 150] (Valletta: G. Muscat, 1915), 46. Petrelli hailed from Montegiorgio in the archdiocese of Fermo, Italy. He was bishop of Lipa, in the Philippines, from 12 April 1910 to 30 May 1915; and Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines from 30 May 1915 to 27 May 1921. He was later nuncio to Perù until 1925. If the information provided by the *Chronicle* is correct, and if Caruana was actually in the Philippines, and if both worked in the Apostolic Delegation, then Caruana must have been in the Far East sometime

appointed Patriarch of Venice who some years earlier had been apostolic visitor to Malta;⁵⁴ Mgr Augustin Dontenwill O.M.I. (1857-1931), Titular Archbishop of Ptolemais in Phoenicia, and previously Archbishop of Vancouver in British Columbia; the Generals of several religious orders; Rev. Oswald Hunter-Blair O.S.B. (1853-1939), the second abbot (from 1913 to 1918) of St Benedict's Abbey, Fort Augustus;⁵⁵ Dom Fidelis de Stotzingen O.S.B. (1871-1947), the second Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation; Dom Azimari O.S.B., the representative of the Abbot of Monte Cassino; Mgr Donald Mackintosh (1876-1943), Rector of the Pontifical Scots' College in Rome, later Archbishop of Glasgow; Rev. Leonidas Perrin S.S. (1878-1944), Rector of the Canadian College; Lord Wellesley; Mr Mounsey; Mgr Prior; Baron and Baroness Zonotti;⁵⁶ the Maltese sculptor Antonio Sciortino (1879-1947), as well as a number of Maltese priests, including Rev. Enrico Dandria (1892-1932), then studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University and who would be ordained priest in the following September); and Rev. Michael Gonzi (1885-1984) who had just been appointed to be Caruana's secretary.⁵⁷

between 1905 and 1906 or 1907. The fact that Petrelli, an Italian priest (and diplomat), was ordained bishop in the church of St Francis *extra muros*, in Manila, on 12 June 1910, indicates that he was probably already working in the Philippines (where he was already well known), otherwise he would have been ordained in Italy. Thus, Petrelli's and Caruana's paths probably crossed each other prior to 1910, even more so before 1908 which is the year when Caruana was deeply engaged in preaching in Great Britain.

⁵⁴ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (24 February 1915): 3.

⁵⁵ See Canon Welsh, ed., *The Catholic Directory for the Clergy and Laity in Scotland 1915* (Edinburgh – Glasgow – Cambridge: Sands & Co, 1915), 95. Besides the names of the members of the male Benedictine community at Fort Augustus, one also finds that Maurus Caruana is described as being “in charge of mission,” thus referring to his role as parish priest. Regarding the interesting life of Sir David Oswald Hunter-Blair. See http://www.benediktinerlexikon.de/wiki/Hunter-Blair,_Oswald (accessed, 5.4.2024).

⁵⁶ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 February 1915): 6.

⁵⁷ See Michael Galea, “Dom Mawru Caruana. Fl-Ewwel Ċentinarju ta' l-Ordinazzjoni tiegħu (II),” *Leben is-Sewwa* (31 August 1991), 7; *Daily Malta Chronicle* (11 February 1915): 7. It was reported in the latter newspaper that the episcopal consecration in Rome was a great success. J.F. Asphar, on behalf of the Old Boys of St Ignatius' College in St Julian's, sent a telegram of congratulations to the newly-consecrated bishop who had received his primary schooling at that College:

“Bishop Caruana
Rome

Old Ignatians offer heartfelt congratulations for Auld Lang Syne ask blessing.”

The following reply was received by Dr J. Dunbar Vella, one of the Old Ignatians:

“Brazilian Consul, Malta. Thanks and blessing Old Ignatians – Maurus Caruana.”

After the episcopal ordination, a reception was held at Palazzo San Callisto, just a stone's throw away from the Basilica. There were several guests, including Cardinal Merry del Val. During this celebration, Archbishop Caruana was decorated with the Grand Cross of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta conferred upon him by the Grand Master, Fra' Galeazzo von Thun und Hohenstein (1850-1931).⁵⁸ Cardinal Merry del Val himself fastened the prestigious decoration on the new bishop's episcopal garments, amidst the jubilation of the guests. After descending into the courtyard of the Palazzo, the papal photographer took a group photo of those who had been present at the solemn episcopal consecration. The cheers of the students of the Pontifical Scots' College enlivened the joyful gathering. On the same day, in the evening, Sir Henry Howard hosted a banquet in honour of the new bishop at the premises of the British legation to the Holy See. Among the attendees, one is bound to mention Cardinal Merry del Val, Cardinal Gasquet, Mgr Stanley, Mgr McIntyre, Mgr Canali, Mgr Mackintosh and Mr Caruana.⁵⁹ So many messages congratulating the new bishop were sent to him in Rome that it was practically impossible to answer each one of them individually. *The Daily Malta Chronicle* reported the following:

As was to be expected, numerous congratulatory telegrams were sent from the Island to His Grace ... and practically the whole of Malta, through its various recognized bodies, as well as some of its principal citizens, hastened to convey the expression of its felicitations and devotion to its new Pastor. His Grace having found it impossible to send a reply to every telegram received, has requested us to thank all in his name, in the following wire we received yesterday:

Rome – 12th February, noon.
To Editor *Chronicle*, Malta.
Impossible to answer all telegrams.
Please thank senders.
Maurus Caruana,
Archbishop.⁶⁰

Archbishop Caruana sent a telegram from Rome to the Archdeacon of the Cathedral Chapter while sending his best wishes to the canons and thanking them for their congratulations.⁶¹

⁵⁸ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (11 February 1915): 7; *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 February 1915): 6.

⁵⁹ See *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (27 February 1915): 6.

⁶⁰ *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (13 February 1915): 3.

⁶¹ See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 61. The telegram was received through the Eastern Telegraph Company Limited at the Malta Station on 15 February 1915, and was addressed to

In a Circular Letter on the beginning of the season of Lent, Bishop Angelo Portelli O.P., Apostolic Administrator, devoted the last paragraph to formally announce the episcopal consecration of Dom Maurus Caruana O.S.B. had taken place and that the new bishop was to be welcomed in due course as God's messenger.⁶² Later, prior to departing from Rome, he was received in an audience by Pope Benedict XV who gifted him with a precious pectoral cross. The episcopal motto chosen by Archbishop Caruana was *Fortis et ardens*⁶³ which reflected his personality, character and spiritual attitude.

Meanwhile, the Cathedral Chapter was carrying out the required formalities entailed during the period leading to the Solemn Entry of the new bishop into his Cathedral church. An extraordinary meeting was called on 18 February 1915 in order to listen to the formal reading of the letter about the nomination of the new bishop.⁶⁴

Embarking on a New Pastoral Mission in Malta

The next step in this meteoric elevation of Archbishop Caruana was to travel to Malta. He reached the island on 25 February 1915 aboard the Italian naval

the Archdeacon of the Cathedral Chapter at Malta, Notabile.

⁶² See AAM, *Floriana, Editti*, vol.36: *Editti di Mgr Fr[a] Angelo Portelli O.P.*, [Lettera] Circolare (11 February 1915), fol.27: "Cogliendo l'occasione vi annunziamo, l'elezione del Pastore di questa Diocesi, la quale è annunziata ufficialmente dalla Santa Sede, nella persona di S.E. Rev.ma Mgr Don [sic] Mauro Caruana, Monaco Benedittino della Congregazione di Scozia, il quale ha ricevuto la consecrazione [sic] Vescovile in Roma, il dì 10 corrente, e che voi accoglierete poi a tempo suo, come l'Angelo speditovi dal Signore."

⁶³ See Gatt, "L-Arcisqof-Isqof ta' Malta Dom Maurus Caruana OSB," 20.

⁶⁴ See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 57. The letter, dated 15 February 1915, calling the canons of the Cathedral Chapter to the meeting, was signed by the Dean, Mgr Vincenzo Vassallo. It is surprising to note that a formal letter by the Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Angelo Portelli O.P. with regard to the nomination of Dom Maurus Caruana O.S.B. was only sent to the Chapter on 15 February 1915. Portelli writes that it was his duty to send to the Chapter a copy of the letter received from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation regarding the nomination. See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 58. Indeed, the Cathedral Archives are in possession of a copy of the letter by Cardinal Gaetano de Lai (1853-1928) of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation (Prot.n.1325/14 of 6 February 1915) which states: "La pubblicazione avvenuta in Concistoro della nomina del Rev.mo P. Mauro Caruana O.S.B. a Vescovo di Malta subito dopo che le pratiche per la sua scelta erano compite, [h]anno impedito di poter prevenire la S.V. Rev.ma di questa designazione." De Lai states that although the news was well known, but he felt it was his duty to officially inform the Apostolic Administrator and the Civil Government. See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 59.

vessel *Apollonia*.⁶⁵ Since the publication of Caruana's nomination and just prior to his arrival in Malta, the pro-British newspaper *The Daily Malta Chronicle* spared no words or column space in extolling the talents and fame enjoyed by Caruana in Great Britain. From what has already been stated in this article, it is evident that the British colonial authorities were very keen in having a safe candidate to the see of Malta, namely, a prelate who harboured pro-British sentiments, especially in light of his formative years and rich experiences in Great Britain, particularly in Scotland.⁶⁶ In its number for Wednesday 24 February 1915, when the *Apollonia* was meant to arrive – yet, its journey from Syracuse was delayed by one day due to stormy weather – *The Daily Malta Chronicle* reports:

Since Mons. Caruana left Malta three weeks ago ... we have had more than one opportunity of ascertaining the high opinion that is entertained of him in the United Kingdom, and especially in Scotland where he has spent the greater part of his life and almost the whole of his sacerdotal career; and the merited tributes recently paid to his abilities and zeal by English papers of various denominations have fully confirmed the high expectations we have formed of the administration he is about to assume of this historic and important See.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ In a Circular Letter issued on 20 February 1915 by the then Vicar General, Can. Luigi Attard, and signed by the Curia Chancellor, Rev. Paolo Vella Mangion, the faithful were invited to welcome (“chi vuole ossequiare”) the new bishop at the Customs House (“alla Dogana”) at his arrival. See AAM, *Floriana, Editti*, vol.36: *Editti di Mgr Fr[a] Angelo Portelli O.P.*, [Lettera] Circolare (20 February 1915], fol.28. The naval vessel *Apollonia* is described as “[un] piroscapo postale.” In a subsequent Circular Letter, on 22 February 1915, an order was given by the Church authorities to greet the arrival of the new bishop by a festive pealing of bells. See AAM, *Floriana, Editti*, vol.36: *Editti di Mgr Fr[a] Angelo Portelli O.P.*, [Lettera] Circolare (22 February 1915], fol.29, stating that the Apostolic Administrator “ordina che all’entrare in porto di detto piroscapo si suoni a festa per qualche tempo e che allo sbarco si suoni anche a festa per un quarto d’ora, sempre dopo il segno dato dalla Con-cattedrale di S. Giovanni.”

⁶⁶ See Louis Cilia, ‘*Kollni kemm jien għalikom.*’ *Il-Ħajja Mqanqla ta’ Mikiel Gonzi u Żminijietu (1885-1984)* (Malta: Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2017), 69-70; 201-203. The important considerations by Cilia provide a character-profile of Dom Maurus Caruana O.S.B., particularly in light of the process which eventually led to his nomination to the see of Malta. Despite the arguments that Caruana was very aloof from the Maltese context because until 1914, he had spent 32 years away from Malta, the British authorities looked at him as a ‘safe’ candidate because of the pro-British leanings of his family, as well as because of the long years spent within the British milieu. Furthermore, his candidacy was further promoted through the successful efforts of Cardinal Gasquet within the Concistorial Congregation of the Holy See. Moreover, being away from Malta for so long a span of time worked out in favour of Caruana who was considered – by both Rome and London – as being untainted by the petty struggles within Malta, both on a macroscopic as well as a microscopic level.

⁶⁷ *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (24 February 1915): 3.

Hugh crowds of Maltese flocked to the vantage points around the Grand Harbour of Valletta and the Three Cities. This rendered Caruana's arrival even more solemn than he expected it to be. At 8:30 a.m., a welcoming party went aboard the *Apollonia*. This included Count Captain Giuseppe Theuma Castelletti, the aide of the Governor of Malta; Mgr Luigi Attard, the Vicar Delegate to Bishop Angelo Portelli O.P., Apostolic Administrator of the diocese; Mgr Gauci; and a number of the bishop's relatives. As Mgr Caruana was disembarking at 9:15 a.m., the *H.M.S. Egmont*, present in the harbour, fired a nine-gun salute. He passed through the customs house accompanied by Rev. Santino De Piro and Rev. Gaetano Mifsud, together with Rev. Edward Farrugia Bugeja, Mr Enrico Caruana (the bishop's father) and Count Captain Theuma Castelletti. As he left the customs house, another gun salute was fired from the Lower Barracca gardens.⁶⁸

The Cathedral Chapter,⁶⁹ the collegiate chapters in the diocese of Malta, the parish priests, the Provincial superiors, the Crown Advocate, as well as the

⁶⁸ See Galea, *L'Iskof ta Malta*, 47-48.

⁶⁹ In actual fact, documentation reveals that the members of the Cathedral Chapter who were present at the Customs House were not allowed to greet the new archbishop after being introduced to him. This transpires from a letter of complaint written on 4 March 1915 by Rev. P. Muscat, Chancellor of the Chapter, to Count Theuma Castelletti. The letter asks why Mgr Archdeacon, Mgr Vincenzo Caruana Gatto, was not allowed to introduce the Monsignors to the Archbishop at the Customs House. The letter expresses the regret shown by the canons who observed that various officials and the Acting Superintendent of Police were allowed to personally greet the archbishop. See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 92. From a statement made by J. Frendo Azopardi, the Acting Superintendent of Police on 8 March, it seems that the canons forming the welcoming party were the Archdeacon and Mgr Mifsud, Mgr Ignazio Panzavecchia, Mgr Matteo Cortis, Mgr Luigi Maria Camilleri, Mgr Ferris, Mgr Peter Cavendish, Mgr Farrugia and Mgr Giovanni Sarreo. See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 95.

In a letter, dated 10 March 1915, Count Theuma Castelletti politely deplored the misunderstanding committed by members of the Chapter. He writes that "it was agreed that, in order to avoid delay and crowding at the moment of first landing, the Archdeacon alone should be presented among the first introductions, and that he should subsequently present the Canons to His Grace after the inspection of the Guard. Apparently, this arrangement was not clearly understood by the Chapter who, as His Grace's boat reached the shore, moved forward in a body and took up a position between His Grace and the Guard of Honour, which was at that moment presenting arms as a compliment to His Grace. Seeing that His Grace was somewhat incommoded I merely requested the Canons to retire and await presentation until after the inspection of the Guard, in accordance with the arrangements previously made. I much regret that the eagerness of the Reverend Canons to express an immediate welcome should have rendered necessary any intervention on my part, and I regret also that my action in attempting to carry out the programme of reception in an orderly manner should have been misinterpreted by them." See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 93, 94.

members of the judiciary and representatives of the Maltese nobility and the *Camera Pontificia* gave a most hearty welcome to the new shepherd of the flock.⁷⁰ On account of the large crowds filling the streets of Valletta, it was not easy for the Bishop's motorcar to reach the Episcopal Palace in the same city. On arriving at the Episcopal Palace, Archbishop Caruana was formally welcomed by Bishop Angelo Portelli O.P. (1852-1927), titular Bishop of Selinus [*episcopus Selinonte*] and the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, and a number of priests and friends of the archbishop. That afternoon, Archbishop Caruana paid a courtesy visit to Field Marshal Paul Methuen (1845-1932), the British Governor.⁷¹ On the same day, Archbishop Caruana published his first pastoral letter to the Church in Malta. In this letter, he expressed his feelings at having to leave the Benedictine abbey to which he was so attached – something which had never crossed his mind – and his joy at returning to his motherland after over thirty-two years and meeting his countrymen and his friends. In this Pastoral Letter he writes:

When lately I was paying you a short visit before sailing, as I thought for Brazil, I did not for a moment suppose that I should in fact abandon my journey, and take up permanent residence in your midst as your Bishop. But just as it was a keen delight to revisit my country, my relatives, and my friends after so long an absence, so now you will understand that it is a bitter pain to leave the monastic home to which the most sacred ties unite me, and to abandon the regular life of the cloister, the sweet yoke of the Benedictine Rule, that it has been my privilege to bear from my youth.⁷²

On 1 March 1915, the members of the Cathedral Chapter convened at the Cathedral in Mdina⁷³ in order to listen to the formal reading of the proclamation of the Papal bulls appointing Caruana as Archbishop of Rhodes and Bishop of

⁷⁰ See Galea, "Dom Mawru Caruana (II)," 7.

⁷¹ See Galea, *L'Iskof ta Malta*, 48-49.

⁷² Archbishop Maurus Caruana O.S.B., *Pastoral Letter* (25 February 1915). See AAM, *Floriana, Editti*, vol. 37, Mons. Caruana, *Pastorali e Circolari 1915-1943*. The Pastoral Letter is found in Latin, as well as in its English, Italian and Maltese translations. The English translation of the above excerpt was also available in *The Daily Malta Chronicle* (1 March 1915): 4.

⁷³ See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 74. The Dean of the Cathedral Chapter, Mgr Vincenzo Vassallo, on 25 February 1915, summoned the canons to the meeting held on 1 March 1915. The said Dean, on 27 February 1915, summoned the canons (See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 85) to yet another meeting on 3 March in order to listen to the reading of a letter by Archbishop Caruana detailing the proxy which was to be made so that Mgr Giuseppe De Piro could make the 'urban possession' on behalf of the new bishop. In fact, the proxy document was signed on the same day, namely, 27 February.

Malta. It was then the normal canonical praxis that these bulls were to be received and read out in order that the new bishop would be officially recognised by the diocese as its legitimate pastor. After the reading of the mentioned documents by Rev. Paul Vella Mangion (1868-1929),⁷⁴ the Curia Chancellor, the bishop's cathedra was, by order of the Chapter, erected anew in the Cathedral church after the death of Archbishop Pace, more than seven months earlier, and the new archbishop's coat of arms raised above the main door of the Cathedral. The bishop's cathedra at St John's Co-Cathedral was also to be erected. The Cathedral Chapter also decided to pay a formal courtesy visit to the Mgr Caruana after the necessary arrangements were to be made.⁷⁵

Although he had not yet formally commenced his pastoral mission, one of Archbishop Caruana's first actions as spiritual shepherd of his flock was to visit the sick. One of the local papers reported that Mgr Caruana, accompanied by his chaplain, Rev. Gaetano Mifsud, visited the General Civil Hospital in Floriana. Upon his arrival, he was welcomed by Dr A. Marras, resident medical superintendent, and by Hon. G. Ferris, acting controller of charitable institutions. He then visited several wards, pausing to meet individual patients and converse briefly with them.⁷⁶ This was indeed a very significant sign of Caruana's pastoral solicitude. A Circular Letter on 2 March 1915 announced that Archbishop Maurus Caruana O.S.B. had appointed Bishop Angelo Portelli O.P. as his Vicar General, Mgr Giuseppe De Piro as the General Secretary of the diocese and Rev. Paolo Vella Mangion as Curia Chancellor.⁷⁷

In keeping with an ancient tradition when the bishops of Malta – in mediaeval times – often resided in Sicily and feared to make the southward journey because of corsairs, the so-called 'urban possession' of the diocese was carried out by proxy by a bishop's delegate, prior to the solemn entry of the bishop in his cathedral church. Although circumstances had changed drastically and it was safe to travel – and Mgr Caruana was already in the diocese – Mgr Giuseppe De Piro, co-adjutor to the Cathedral Chapter Dean was delegated by the archbishop to

⁷⁴ See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 73; Galea, *L'Iskof ta Malta*, 49. A letter by Archbishop Caruana was also read out during the Chapter meeting.

⁷⁵ See *Daily Malta Chronicle* (2 March 1915).

⁷⁶ See *Daily Malta Chronicle* (6 March 1915).

⁷⁷ See AAM, *Floriana, Editti*, vol.37, Mons. Caruana, *Pastorali e Lettere Circolari*, fol.2. Subsequent Circular Letters by Auxiliary Bishop Angelo Portelli announce the "urban possession" of the diocese on 14 March 1915 (See *ibid.*, fol.4), and the Solemn Entry into Mdina on 19 April 1915 (See *ibid.*, fol.11).

undertake the 'urban possession' of the diocese. This canonical procedure took place on 14 March 1915.⁷⁸

The Formal Inauguration of Caruana's Episcopate at St Paul's Cathedral, Mdina

The Solemn Entry took place on Monday 19 April.⁷⁹ According to a long-established tradition, the new Bishop left the Episcopal Palace in Valletta on the previous afternoon, at 4:15 p.m. He was wearing "the habit and the black cowl of the Benedictine Order, only relieved by a purple zucchetto."⁸⁰ A solemn cortege, composed of the Bishop's gala carriage, drawn by four black horses, festively adorned with scarlet plumes and rosettes,⁸¹ the British Governor's aide-de-camp's carriage and other carriages carrying church dignitaries, inched its way through Valletta, Floriana and Hamrun. Large crowds lined the streets on

⁷⁸ See *Malta Taghna* (20 March 1915): 3; Galea, "Dom Mawru Caruana (II)," 7; Alexander Bonnici, *Mons. Gużepi De Piro* (Malta: Soċjetà Missjunarja ta' San Pawl, 1985), 2:35. The proxy document which was signed on 27 February 1915 bears the signatures of Archbishop Caruana, Mgr Giuseppe De Piro, Alfonso Maria Galea and the notary, Paolo Vassallo. See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 87, 88. With regard to the "urban possession," see also, ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 113 verso and fol. 114r; fol. 117.

⁷⁹ Mgr Giuseppe De Piro, in his role as General Secretary of the Diocese, on 16 March 1915 informed the Dean of the Cathedral Chapter, Mgr Vincenzo Vassallo, about the Solemn Entry. See ACM, *Min. Capit.*, vol. 60, fol. 131. The faithful had been notified about the Solemn Entry or *Ingresso* of the new archbishop by means of a Pastoral Letter which was read out in all churches. See *Daily Malta Chronicle* (6 April 1915). The solemn feast of St Publius in Floriana was originally scheduled for Sunday 18 April 1915 since that was the third Sunday of Eastertide, the annual recurrence of the feast in that parish. In order not to clash with the vigil of the new bishop's Solemn Entry, the Floriana archpriest and clergy decided to postpone the feast by one week. This eventually made it possible for Mgr Caruana to preside, on Sunday 25 April, at the solemn liturgy for the feast of the parish of his birth and baptism. See *Daily Malta Chronicle* (12 March 1915). Moreover, the Colonial Government decreed that government offices were to remain closed on the day of the *Ingresso*: "Il Gvern hareg avvis fejn ordna illi nhar l'Ingress ta l'Iskof Mons Caruana, li icun fid-19 ta April, l'officini tal Gvern icunu maghluqa ghall din l'ocasioni" (*Malta Taghna* [3 April 1915]: 2). Very detailed accounts about Caruana's Solemn Entry featured some days later in "The New Archbishop of Malta. Popular Rejoicings," *The Tablet* 125/3911 (24 April 1915): 528, and a few weeks later in "The Bishop in Malta. Solemn Entry into His See" *The Tablet* 125/3916 (29 May 1915): 700-701. At first glance, the prominence given by *The Tablet* in reporting these events in great detail is surprising.

⁸⁰ Mangion, "From Fort Augustus Abbey," 36; Mangion, "Dom Mawru Caruana OSB (1867-1943): Minn Monaku fl-Abbazija ta' Fort Augustus ghal Arcisqof-Isqof ta' Malta," *Knisja 2000* 27, no.111 (January-March 2015): 105-107.

⁸¹ See Mangion, "From Fort Augustus Abbey," 36.

that Sunday afternoon. On the way, parish priests gave short addresses to the Archbishop and bands played festive music. Various congregations of nuns, too, as well as children residing in church institutions flanked both sides of the main thoroughfare through which the corteo was passing.

As soon as the cortege reached the slope leading to the old capital city, Mdina, the horses drawing the bishop's carriage were replaced by men. The carriage proceeded to the Dominican convent in Rabat where the bishop was to spend the night. Along the road, more joyous crowds expressed their enthusiasm at the sight of their new shepherd. After entering the Dominican convent at about 8:00 p.m. – following what had been a momentous afternoon and evening – the Archbishop welcomed the members of the Cathedral Chapter, addresses were exchanged and gifts presented to Caruana.

On the morning of 19 April 1915, punctually at 8:00 a.m., Archbishop Caruana left the Dominican convent and proceeded to the Church of St Mark, run by the Augustinian friars. On arrival, accompanied by the members of the Cathedral Chapter, he entered the church where he put on the episcopal attire and a cope. Again, according to a venerable tradition, he rode upon a white mare decorated with precious cloth. Eight representatives of the Maltese nobility carried the ornate baldacchino beneath which was the Archbishop on horseback. A solemn procession in which the parish priests, the religious orders, the canons of the collegiate chapters of Malta and canons of the Cathedral Chapter participated – followed by the Archbishop – wound itself through the few roads separating St Mark's Church in Rabat and the Cathedral Church in Mdina. The Archbishop blessed the crowds who filled the streets, as well as balconies and the rooftops.⁸² Flowers were showered upon Caruana. Prior to reaching St Paul's Square, namely the square in front of the Cathedral, the corteo paused for some time, next to the Banca Giuratale where a welcome discourse was pronounced in Latin by one of the clerics, Albert V. Pantallaresco (1891-1963), ordained priest a few months later.⁸³

On arriving at the Cathedral parvis, the Archbishop dismounted and entered the Cathedral where the *Te Deum* was sung.⁸⁴ Archbishop Caruana then

⁸² On this unique festive occasion and in order to encourage the population from all over the Island to participate in the Solemn Entry, arrangements were made by the management of the Malta Railway for a special service of trains, meaning that a special timetable was devised with trains running more frequently. See *Daily Malta Chronicle* (15 April 1915).

⁸³ A local newspaper described Pantallaresco's address as follows: "un magnifico indirizzo che fu molto apprezzato da S.E. il Vescovo." See *Malta* (19-20 April 1915).

⁸⁴ See Mangion, "From Fort Augustus Abbey," 36-37.

presided at a solemn pontifical Mass and eloquently delivered a fine sermon in Italian on the Good Shepherd.⁸⁵ After this liturgical celebration where Caruana formally took possession of the diocese, he then greeted the distinguished guests led by the British Governor, Lord Methuen, in the main hall at the Archbishop's Palace in Mdina. The Dean and the members of the Cathedral Chapter and the Provincial superiors also greeted the Archbishop.

Conclusion: A Scholar and a Gentleman

The aim of this article is to focus on the period 1867-1915 in the life of Maurus Caruana, namely his origins, formation, life as a Benedictine monk in Scotland, right up to the first days of his mission as bishop of Malta. A proper account and evaluation of his long bishopric until 1943 merits more research and a separate academic study. It would be very appropriate if seasoned scholars and able researchers were to strive towards the publication of a proper detailed biography on Archbishop Maurus Caruana O.S.B. His formative years, followed by his many endeavours as a young Benedictine priest – outlined in this article – offer a possible hermeneutical locus to the many subsequent complex issues and intricacies which arose during his long episcopate, as well as an appreciation of his pastoral mission as a true shepherd in the challenges facing Maltese society in the period between the two World Wars. The accomplished Church historian Arthur Bonnici (1903-1978), then diocesan secretary, penned a well-written and masterful early evaluation of Caruana, a few days after his death:

From the day he arrived in Malta, His Grace showed himself ready to work hard. Full of St Benedict's spirit he aimed at destroying everything that was wrong, encouraging every good initiative and introducing any innovation that would lead to the spiritual welfare of his fold and to the honour of the Church in Malta. And this has proved true from the almost 500 Pastoral and Circular Letters which he personally or through his Vicar Generals addressed to the Maltese community in several occasions, when he felt it necessary or convenient.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ The homily was praised in these words: "Una bellissima omelia in buon Italiano, prendendo occasione dell'accoglienza fattagli, elogiando la fede dei maltesi ... Questa omelia mise in rilievo una delle belle doti, che adornano la benamata persona del nostro amato Diocesano, quella cioè di ottimo oratore" (*Malta*, 19-20 April 1915).

⁸⁶ Arthur Bonnici, "Death of His Grace the Archbishop Bishop Dom Maurus Caruana O.S.B.," Supplement to *Malta Review* (21 December 1943): 2.

Bonnici then proceeds to provide the reader with an X-ray which sums up who Archbishop Caruana was, and what his main positive traits were. He describes him as:

a priest full of zeal for God's magnificence, as a Pastor who cared for the spiritual welfare of his fold, an upright and merciful Father, as a man outstanding for his dignity, especially during religious functions, as one who fought for justice and righteousness, faithful to the supreme Head of the Church, loyal to the British Crown, a scholar, a gentleman, generous and sincere.⁸⁷

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⁸⁷ Ibid.