

It's Coming ... May 6th-29th /2011

Down Ancient Paths presents...

***The Malta Institute: Exploring 'the Sacred' at a
Mediterranean Crossroads
Followed by a North African Excursion to Tunisia into the
World of the Early Church Fathers***

- **The Sacred in Ancient Maltese Neolithic Stone Temples**
- **The Sacred in the Lives of the Earliest Maltese Christians**
- **The Sacred in Centuries of Maltese Christian Architecture**
- **The Sacred in Contemporary Christian Presence on Malta**

The Maltese archipelago has been an oft contested crossroads of western civilization since antiquity. It is strategically situated approximately 100 kilometres south of Sicily and 340 kilometres north of Tunisia. Some world historians have suggested that since the beginning of human settlement the islands have been invested with sacred energy through the performance of fertility, death and rebirth rituals. On the islands of Malta and Gozo numerous megalithic sites have been identified which predate Stonehenge by 1500 years. They testify to Malta having been a cradle of European civilization. Its impressive temple culture features stone sanctuaries which may well be among the world's oldest centres of religious observance.

Situated at the nexus of several Mediterranean sea routes, Malta has been coveted and colonized by a succession of maritime powers. Consequently the island possesses an underappreciated but stunningly rich, historically complex, cultural mosaic which dazzles the visitor. Its almost 2000 year old, unbroken Christian tradition commenced with the Apostle Paul's unexpected arrival on the island in first-century, Roman times as the survivor of a shipwreck. His miraculously empowered preaching over the course of several months resulted in the conversion of the island. Over a millennium later, the island was populated with churches constructed by military monks, the Knights of the Order of St. John, who waged a titanic struggle against the invading forces of Islam. Today Malta is a colourful destination of Christian pilgrimage. The abundance of churches on the island reflects its embedded, festive Christian character.

The city of Valletta, Malta's massively walled capital founded in 1566, is one of Europe's least known but most beautiful cities. Its treasury of museums, gardens, palaces and churches warrants its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In fact much of its 16th century, baroque architectural ambiance survives to the present. Winston Churchill, who valued Malta's superb harbours and docking facilities as a vital naval base

during the Second World War, once idealized the British fortress-colony as a ‘tiny rock of history and romance’.

During our time in Malta we will be based at Mt. St. Joseph Retreat House, Mosta (see www.maltajesuitretreats.com/mtsjoseph.htm)

If you want to be put on the seriously interested list to receive more information about The Malta Institute and the extension to Tunisia when available contact:

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