



3rd March, 2012

32/2012

ITALIAN DELEGATION ARRIVES IN MALTA TODAY

A delegation of 116 Italians from Monte Cassino (Rome, Italy) including Benedictine monks, 26 choir members, a reenactment group and representatives of civil society, are expected to arrive in Malta today to participate in the annual event of peace, hope and fraternity, known as the Benedictine Torch. The Torch will be lit during a celebration of Mass which will be held tomorrow, Sunday 4th March, at St. John's Co-Cathedral, at 5:30 p.m. Mgr Pietro Vittorelli, Archabbot of Monte Cassino Abbey, and Mgr Renato Boccardo, Archbishop of Spoleto, Norcia, will concelebrate. Mass will be animated by the Benedictine Choir of Monte Cassino.

The Benedictine Torch will be lit by Archbishop Paul Cremona O.P. just after the Communion rite. After the celebration of Mass, a re-enactment will be held outside St. John's Co-Cathedral. The Benedictine Torch will then be taken to Auberge de Castille where it will be welcomed by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. European Commission Vice-president Antonio Tajani will also be attending this celebration.

On March 14th, the Torch will be taken to the Vatican to be blessed by Pope Benedict XVI, and will then be taken to the Shrine of St Benedict in Monte Cassino on March 20th.

As previously announced, this year the Benedictine Order has chosen Malta for this event. Every year, since 1964, the Torch is the main feature of a pilgrimage beginning from the city chosen to light the torch and ending in Monte Cassino (Rome, Italy) at the Shrine of St Benedict.

In 1964, when Saint Benedict was proclaimed Patron Saint of Europe, it was decided that the lighting of a torch would take place annually in various countries, to represent European unity. The torch is now known as the Torch of Saint Benedict. Since 1992, the year of the Maastricht Treaty, it has also become a symbol of peace.

Saint Benedict was chosen as the symbol and the Saint to testify to the common Christian cultural roots which the 27 European Countries share. The lighting of the torch represents the light of Saint Benedict which spans over Europe bringing peace, fraternity and friendship.