



24th February, 2012

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THE BENEDICTINE TORCH TO BE LIT IN MALTA

The Benedictine Order has chosen Malta to hold its annual event of peace, hope and fraternity, known as the Benedictine Torch. 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.

This year, the Benedictine Torch will be lit in Malta by Archbishop Paul Cremona O.P. on Sunday 4th March, during a Mass which he will celebrate together with Mgr Pietro Vittorelli, Archabbot of Montecassino Abbey, and Mgr Renato Boccardo, Archbishop of Spoleto, Norcia. This Mass, which will be animated by the Benedictine Choir of Monte Cassino, will be held at St. John's CoCathedral, at 5.30 p.m. After the celebration of Mass, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi will welcome the Benedictine Torch at Auberge de Castille, Valletta.

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.

Last year, the Torch was lit in London during a special service in Westminster Abbey. Representatives of the European Institutions and of the Italian Government were also present for this ecumenical celebration, together with representatives of other political and religious institutions. This was the first year in which the torch had been lit in a non-Roman Catholic Church. The following day, the Torch of Saint Benedict was taken to Westminster Cathedral where a Mass was celebrated by the Archbishop of Westminster. The pilgrimage of the Torch ended in Monte Cassino with a special service on St Benedict's Day, on the 21st March.

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.