



**Execution crucifix** – Old crucifix used by the Confraternity of St Joseph during public executions during the Order’s stay in Birgu when the gallows were in Birgu square.

**Charity tray** – One of similar decorated trays used by the Confraternity of Charity at Vittoriosa, called bacini or trionfi, for the distribution of bread during the feast of Our Lady of Charity. The decorations are in the form of loaves of bread.

### LITURGICAL SILVERWARE

**Holy Communion tongs** – Pair of tongs with long hands used during the plague, enabling the priest to distribute Holy Communion while keeping a safe distance from infection.

**Chalices and Sanctuary lamps** – Disused church objects from St Lawrence Church and other churches in Vittoriosa.

Reliquary Monstrance – Donated to the Church of St. Lawrence by the Grand Bailiff of Germany.

### BOOKS AND DOCUMENTS

**Incunabula** – This refers to the first printed books, which included a Bible, the Vulgate, translated into Latin by St. Jerome; and the first printed version of Ptolemy’s geography.



**Melitensia** – This includes medical books from the Order’s Holy Infirmary at Vittoriosa; a 17th century ecclesiastical lexicon compiled by Domenico Magri, vouching to Vittoriosa’s eminence as a place of learning; a bill of lading of 1777 from Vittoriosa’s merchandise transport activity; books belonging to Maltese patriot Dun Mikiel Xerri with his signature; a copy of Malta’s first Maltese journal, L’Argo, dated 1804.

**Choir books** – Decorated medieval hand-made choir books for Gregorian music dating back to the time when the clergy of St Lawrence church enjoyed privileges and benevolences from the Inquisitors and were called Beneficiati.

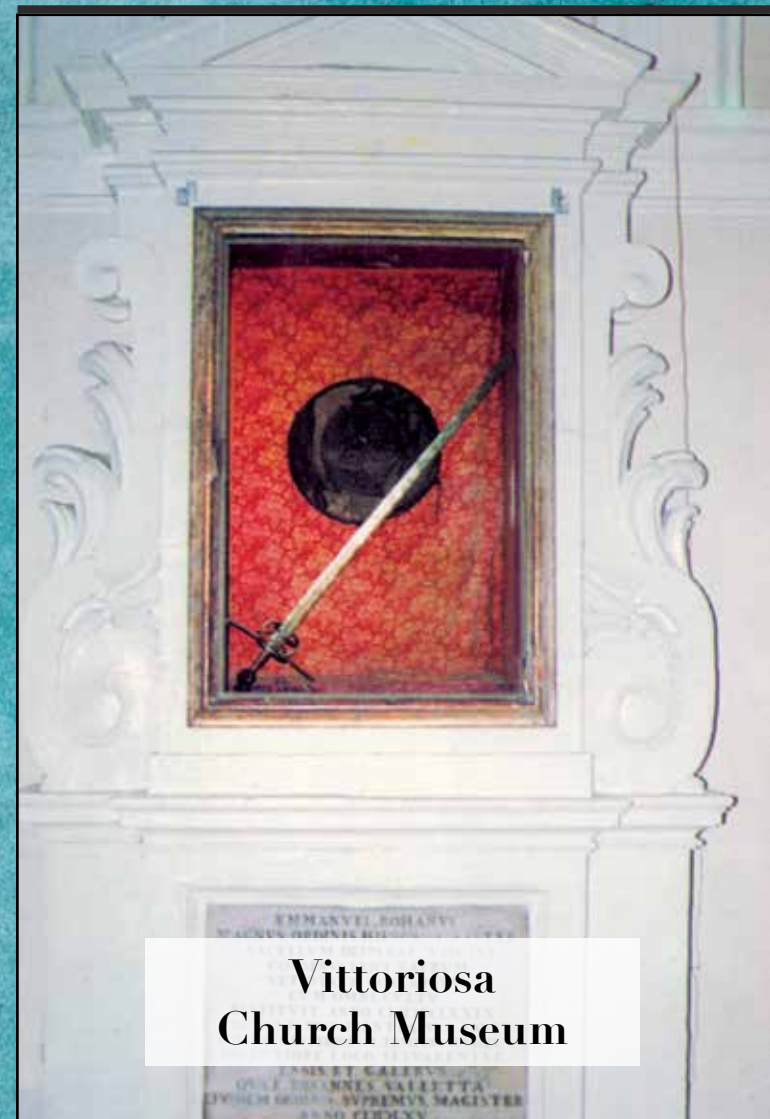
**Playing cards** – Unique set of playing cards dating to 1609 with images from the chivalric Order. These are accompanied with some of the related printing blocks.

### WAR RELICS

**Memorialia of the Clock Tower** – One of the two clock hands is preserved in a showcase and is accompanied by photos of the Clock Tower before and after it was hit during the war.

**Memorialia of Vittoriosa churches** – Decorated and painted stoned picked up from the war debris of Vittoriosa churches that were destroyed or hit during the war: remnants from the Dominican Church of the Annunciation and its old Siculo Norman Belfrey; remnants from the church of St Anthony the Abbot, which was the Order of St John’s Parish Church at Birgu; remnants from the cupola of St Lawrence church.

**Medals and uniforms** – These were donated to the Museum by citizens from Vittoriosa who served during the war.



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VITTORIOSA HISTORICAL & CULTURAL SOCIETY  
www.vittoriosahistorica.org



MALTA ARTS COUNCIL  
www.maltaculture.com

Vittoriosa  
Church Museum

## JEAN DE LA VALLETTE'S SWORD AND HAT

Close to the Great Siege Monument in Vittoriosa Square stood the medieval Clock Tower which was destroyed during the war. During the Great Siege of 1565 the Grand Master Jean De La Vallette kept watch from the Clock Tower on the Turks whose encampments engulfed all the harbour area surrounding the besieged Birgu. When the enemy breached the bastions and were about to enter into Birgu, he joined the defenders but not before visiting the Greek sanctuary of Our Lady of Damascus to pray for her intercession.

After Great Siege victory De La Vallette came back to the Greek chapel and left his battle Sword and Hat as ex-voto gifts to the Madonna. As a lasting memory of the Great Siege victory, the Grand Master renamed the city of Birgu as Vittoriosa.

The sanctuary of Our Lady of Damascus adjoins the Oratory of St Joseph which now houses the Vittoriosa Museum. This chapel served as a parish church for the Greeks who had accompanied the Knights from Rhodes when these settled at Birgu in 1530.

The icon of Our Lady of Damascus was subsequently transferred to the Greek church in the new city of Valletta and was replaced by the present silver-clad Greek effigy of Our Lady. De La Vallette's Sword and Hat remained nonetheless in the Marian sanctuary and were later placed in the baroque niche built by Grand Master Emanuel De Rohan. The chapel continued to serve the Greek community at Vittoriosa until the early 19th century, when it was annexed to the Oratory of St Joseph constructed in 1832.

De La Vallette's battle Sword is a sleek and functional steel weapon with a simple hilt. A Ceremonial Sword and Dagger with golden hilts were awarded to De La Vallette by Philip II, Emperor of Spain, for his bravery during the Great Siege. These were held in the Palace Armoury in Valletta until they were appropriated by Napoleon and are now exhibited in the Louvre. De La Vallette's Hat is a typical a mid-16th century broad-brimmed hat.

## SELECTION OF EXHIBITS

### PAINTINGS

**Icon of the Sagra Famgla** - Byzantine icon that was venerated by the Greek community at Birgu dating to early 16th century.

**St Jerome** – Oil on canvas by Mattia Preti. It was in the Church of St Philip Neri at Vittoriosa

**Our Lady of the Angels** – Painted by Rocco Buhagiar. Depicts Our Lady with St Michael and the Guardian Angel. It was also brought from the Church of St Philip Neri.



VITTORIOSA CHURCH MUSEUM  
*A Voluntary Entity*

Opening Hours - All week from 09.30 to 12.00  
Entrance Free

## SACRED VESTMENTS & RELIGIOUS ARTIFACTS

**Jurat's sash** – During the time of the Order of St John, Vittoriosa had its local government called the Università which shared power with its Mdina counterpart. The councillors were called giurati and they attended religious functions at St Lawrence Church. In its stratum, the sash bears the coat of arms of the Order and that of Grand Master Emanuel Pinto.

**Confraternity tunics** – Medallions and mannequins with tunics from confraternities that existed at St Lawrence church, namely that of St Joseph, dating to the 12th century, of Charity (1582), of the Holy Crucifix (1753), of the Via Sagra (1876).

**Old tapestry** – Section of red embroidered 17th century tapestry from the disused Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Vittoriosa.

**Bishop's hat** – Hat of Malta's Bishop Tommaso Gargallo (1578-1614), one of the Bishops who occupied the Bishop's Palace and Curia at Vittoriosa and who had their throne at St Lawrence church. Bishop Gargallo quarrelled with the Monsignors of the Mdina Cathedral.

**Inquisitor's pectoral cross** – The Roman Inquisition established its seat at Vittoriosa in the Inquisitors Palace in 1575 and survived until 1798 when it was expelled, along with the Order of St John, by the French revolutionaries. 62 Inquisitors served at Vittoriosa of whom 7 later became Cardinals and 2 became Popes. The Inquisitors officiated from St Lawrence church.

**Sedan chair** – Artistically designed and with fine mouldings, this 17th century specimen, salvaged from the war debris. It was used from the processional administration of the Holy Eucharist to old and sick people confined in their homes.

