



"The harvest of righteousness shall be sown in peace by those who make peace" (Letter of St. James)

FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE SISTERS OF JOY
An ecumenical Foundation of Prayer, Peace and Reconciliation

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My dear Friends

In March 2003, after an operation, I made my first trip to Malta and immediately I had a sense of familiarity, as the light, stone and immediacy of the Maltese people reminded me of Israel and my Semitic roots. *'Although the air here is purer and it is quieter'* I was reminded by a new Maltese friend.

One day I went into the tiny bar of the Panorama Hotel, which is perched high above the Mediterranean near the beautiful church in Mellieha (close to Gozo) and said to the waitress how much I liked Malta. *'Come and live with us,'* she said. And, in a way, on my recent trip to the southern village of Xajhira and the welcoming city of Zabbar, I have done exactly that – at least in my heart.

I had gone last June at the invitation of a lady I met at Heathrow in 2017, when I was coming off a plane from Toronto. Out of the blue she rang me in Cambridge on Christmas Day and I spent days at her home on the southern coast, spending the evenings in getting to know the locals and the Maltese who came there to get away from the towns in the summer, take the sea air and swim. I could only manage a paddle but watched the vast expanse of sea.

I have a friend of 30 years, Fr Louis, and it was in his home town of Żabbar that I spent the last six days of my stay. The weather was blisteringly hot and the buses crowded, but the Church of Our Lady of Graces, where Louis had celebrated his first Mass, was cool and ravishingly beautiful. I became part of the local landscape and welcomed into the home of a local family, Christina, Maria and Stephanie, who is to be married next year. This beautiful family gave me love and protection and I was also nourished physically, as Christina loves to cook and showered me with all manner of fruits-plucked from their own garden, which is like a small orchard and adjacent to the kitchen-and local delicacies; the almond biscuits reminded me of my Jewish childhood, as it is a traditional nut in Jewish baking.

One day I had to go to Floriana for a meeting, the rather French-looking gateway to Valletta, the capital, and in Floriana I felt something special; a young woman was running a small bar under the

palm trees and I had a nice chat to her about how she got started. I stumbled into the Botanic Garden while the gate was supposed to be closed and saw all kinds of wonderful cacti, new and old. You could only see the older collection, I was told, by climbing up a fairly steep ladder in the open air; this yielded a rather mystical view of Valletta in the distance which made my heart miss a beat and made me feel, at nine-thirty in the morning, that I was alone in a magical world.



The Phoenicia Hotel in Floriana has been newly renovated with soft white armchairs in the spacious lounge and a delightful waitress of long-standing served me tea and biscuits. *'Have you seen the garden?'* she asked. So I descended to basement level and discovered that, out the back, was huge hidden garden with palm trees and endless varieties of Mediterranean shrubs and blooms. Benches were dotted around in the shade and I slipped onto one or two of these during my walk, to take it all in.

I may do a concert in Valletta, in 2021, as I was privileged to see the Anglican Cathedral there, and then had refreshments in a crypt where there are events. And, speaking of Anglicans, I came back to a completely new home! Storey's House is an Anglican Foundation which dates back three centuries. Edward Storey was a wealthy Cambridge bookseller in the late 17th century, and left money for 10 alms-houses to be built for the poor widows of the clergy.

Two minutes' walk from Lucy Cavendish College, where I graduated in Hebrew Studies in 1992, Storey's House, an extension of the original Foundation of Edward Storey sits like an island on Mount Pleasant. All 47 apartments wind up, in a sheltered complex & with Victorian houses, to Castle Hill, part of the old Roman town, where there once was a castle, now just a tall green mound.

I am a Beneficiary of the legacy of Edward Storey, his generosity and goodwill. May The Little Sisters of Joy go from strength to strength under his patronage, and may the beauty of Storey's House and garden be an inspiration to all live here and all who come to visit.

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