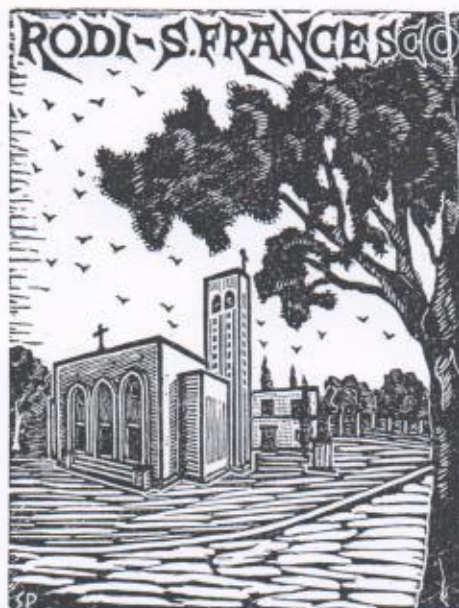
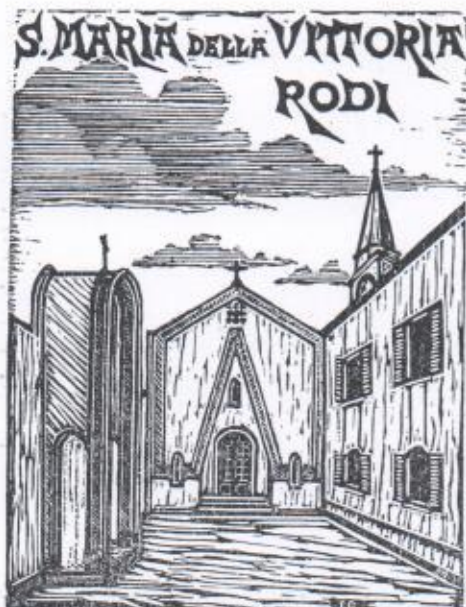


# FRANCISCANS IN RHODES



Ι. ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ  
ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ  
— ΡΟΔΟΣ —

*Catholic church of Saint Francis, Rhodes.*



Ι. ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ  
ΑΓΙΑΣ ΜΑΡΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΝΙΚΗΣ  
— ΡΟΔΟΣ —

*Catholic church of Holy Mary of Victory  
Rhodes*

The tourist who today visits Rhodes and who enjoys walking through the streets of the town which has given the name to all the island, will eventually arrive at a small sacred enclosure of good workmanship; with a wrought-iron fence, a pavement of black and white flint stones with the design of the center of a great rose window, a Way of the Cross of stone sculptured in relief (a copy of those made in bronze by Maraini at Mount Fileremo in the vale opposite the one-time convent of the Franciscans), and the composite portal of the small church of St. Mary of Victory where is venerated the stone image (of the same title) which dates back to the fourteenth century.

This is the parrochial seat which serves as the headquarters for the few hundred Catholics of the Dodea-

nese over which Italy has turned another fair page and one, the last, most lovingly, a tribute to the events here.

The classic arch of the portal of St. Mary is surmounted by a large pointed false arch which finally comes to an ideal bracket of the church which is surmounted by a cross of the Holy Land cut in relief.

This cross is not here accidentally. Although the Custody of the Holy Land came to Rhodes only in 1972, this Aegean island, at the end of the Middle Ages, lay on the route which led to the Holy Land and goes back, also, to the Hospitaliers of St. John near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre who passing through Acre and Cyprus finally became the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Malta, having held Rhodes and leaving a

*The Custody of the Holy Land has activities which are centered in Jerusalem and extend to the following countries; Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus; also at the end of the Turkish empire it kept a presence in Istanbul which no longer functions today. Since 1972 the Catholics of the Greek dodecanesse have been entrusted to the Franciscans. The connection of the Franciscans with Rhodes is very old. Here is shown the monogram of the name of Jesus spread by St. Bernardine.*

*The Franciscans carved on a stone in a commercial street of the old city of Rhodes.*





*Port of Rhodes; Church of the Annunciation.*

sign made everlasting by the wonderful and valiant restorations of the Italians over a period of thirty years.

Officially the Franciscans arrived in Rhodes at the beginning of 1700 dedicating themselves above all to the assistance of Christians enslaved in the galleys and existing in both tranquil and adverse times with Franciscan help.

Fr. Umberto Baratto, succeeding the brothers of Umbria (in the name of the Custody at the invitation of the Holy See) has studied the chronicles of his predecessors thoroughly. These predecessors held a miserable footing in Rhodes. From him is the study of such fragmentary remains of the manuscript which we reproduce below.

#### **The Chronicle**

The chronicle of St. Mary is composed of four volumes. The first volume is from 1719 to 1846! the se-

cond from 1856 to 1897 (in the rear of this column is to found a "First Catalogue of the Missionaries — Presidents — and Apostolic Prefects of the Rhodian Mission"); the third is from 1897 to 1907 and the fourth from 1907 to 1911.

The first volume is the most interesting part of the Chronicles. It has incorporated the original manuscript — Master Book — commencing (presumably) in 1720 and which describes the religious situation of the island, tells of the decision of the Propaganda of the Faith to install two friars at Rhodes and the arrival and experiences of these two. Finally on pages 74-75 we find reported the chronicle of the placing of the first stone and the inauguration of the church of St. Mary the remains of which are now the actual sacristry.

The Master Book of 1720 is contained in a complete transcript at the beginning of the first volume. Since the Chronicle finishes with the year

1720, it is probable that the transcript was made either in this year or, at the latest, in the following one. In fact the first volume continues to after the end of 1856.

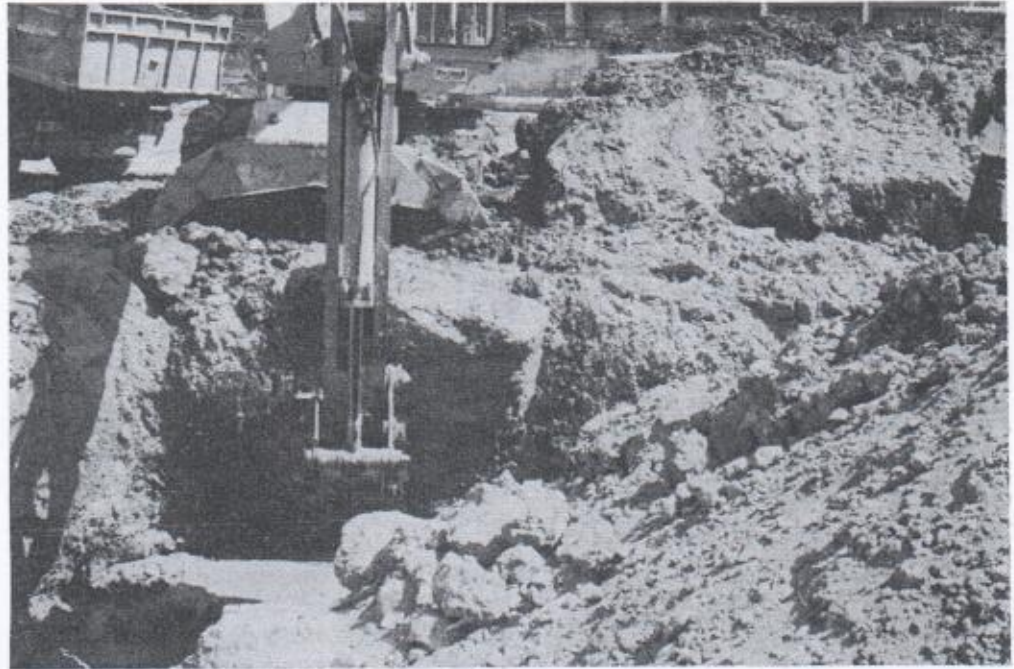
The ancient and famous island of Rhodes, formerly the celebrated seat of the Religion (lious) of the Knights of St. John, in the present day groans under the Ottoman Dominion; the ordinary inhabitants are Turks and Greeks, and not a few Jews; the least are the Latin Catholics counting fifty souls, from the oldest to the youngest; a few of these Latins are joined in marriage with Greeks, and perhaps not all the children are raised or educated in their Holy Faith and this is partially caused by the lack of Missionary Fathers who have not been able to have a permanent or stable control over this small vestige of the Faith and who could not conti-

nue with their necessary Apolostic work.

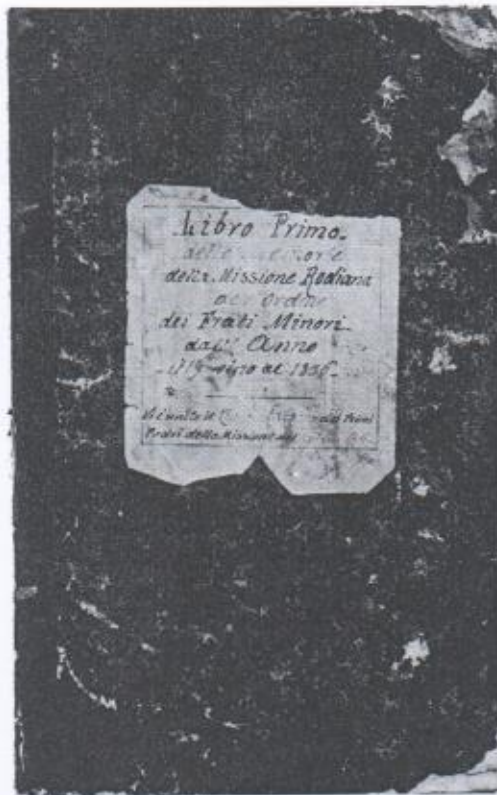
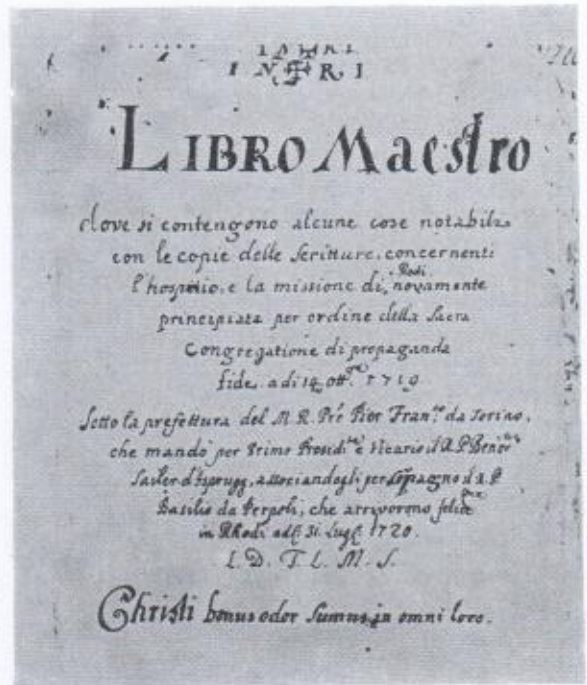
#### THE GALLEYS AND THE WORKS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE IN THEM.

There are usually two galleys that winter in this part of Rhodes and most of the slaves (rowers) are Latins, and therefore we are asked for the continal assistance of Spiritual Service, all the more so as they were allowed in their chapel not only for the holy Mass but where they were able to be accomodated for confession and Communion, and also where they are allowed on four occasions to have other Ecclesiastical functions, namely 1st; on the Vigil of Ephinay of blessing the galley, signing the Christian slaves with holy water on the forehead and allowing them to kiss

*Work on the foundations of the present church of S. Maria della Victoria (1975) has revealed the existence of the ancient port equipmen. Here there are stones of the pier.*



Reproduction of title of the chronicle  
 Below: the cover and title of the Libro maestro containing the chronicle.



the Cross. 2nd. on the day of the Purification of presenting each one a small blessed candle. 3rd. On Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent, of placing the ashes on the head of everyone saying the words used by Holy Church, "Remember man etc". 4th. On Palm Sunday of bringing the blessed palms and of giving to all a cross made of palm. The function always begins with the blessing on the poop deck.

All the aforementioned functions are made at night with a lamp out of necessity as during the day the poor slaves are occupied in various fatiguing employments.

The Sacred Congregation of the Faith considering the necessity of rendering service and assistance to the suffering inhabitants as well as procuring for the poor suffering slaves the salvation of their souls together with the conserving of the Holy Roman Catholic Faith, resulted in the establishment of an Apostolic Mission formed and perpetuated by the Cus-

17. 17. 1.

In nomine Domini Amen.

La città è fondata l'anno 1717 in un'isola della Sicilia  
 Reale de Cavalieri di S. Giovanni, al presente come son i  
 Dominii ottomanni; e ordinarij abitanti sono Turchi, et greci  
 con altri schiacciati; pochissimi sono di abito Latino, fra grandi e piccioli  
 non arrivano a cinquanta persone; alcuni di questi Latini sono conquisiti  
 in matrimonio con greche; e perciò non tutti i figli loro sono stati  
 vati ed educati nel sacrosancto Latino, e ciò avviene per l'altre cause  
 per il difetto di un'educazione. Insuper non fanno  
 stabili et in continua successione di per un'anno et di un'altro, perche  
 picciol viene dal suo, e forse più abbondante e copioso con le loro  
 copiose fatiche quotidiane.

Il governo parve per ordinario non valere in pagamento de' soldi  
 i più schiacciati suoi Latini, e perciò chiesero per il suddetto Stato  
 continua epistolaria, tanto più che non solo è lo Stato nelle loro  
 capelle di neppuna dire la S. messa dove convenientemente possono  
 separarsi e unirsi, ma anche legito di far quattro volte di far  
 l'altre funzioni Ecclesiastiche, cioè alla vigilia dell'Epifania si tengono  
 di la galera nel luogo ogni Schiavo Christiano in acqua benedetta in fronte  
 dagli da baccione il S. Crocifisso. Et il giorno della Purificac  
 si presenta ad ogni sua casa una candela picciola benedetta agli officij di due  
 no più grande, et un'altro punto è dopo la galera dritto in poppa.

3.º al giorno delle Canoni, cioè il primo giorno della Pasqua  
 si pone la S. croce sopra il capo di S. Michele, dicono le Materie  
 volte, et una la S. croce innalzato bene &c. sulla S. Domine del  
 olive. Appresso le palme benedette domole di ogni cosa con la sua croce  
 fatte di palma. Cominciano a baciare la punta con la benedizione in suppa.

Reproduction of page 1 of the chronicle

tody of Constantinople so that two missionary priests would be sent.

The letter written by the Sacred Congregation is as follows.

OUTSIDE. To the Reverend Prefect of the Missions of the Observant Religious in Constantinople.

INSIDE. Rev. Father.

This Sacred Congregation having resolved to commit the care of such Catholics who are found in the Island of Rhodes to the religious of your Order, we are sending to the custody Fr. Basilio di Pepoli and Fr. Giovanni di Vallico the bearers of this letter, in order that upon their arrival you

send two subjects who are in possession of the necessary language for the exercising of their apostolic ministry with complete profit, and since we consider it to be the mission nearest to Smyrna, we permit ourselves to recommend in that city to Fr. Pier Battiste di Garbagnate, Vicar Apostolic in the city of Smyrna, that he supervise all that it is considered necessary for the two laborers and that he send them to their destination with all that is necessary according to the circumstances. This is as much motivation as occurs to me at the present. I recommend myself to your prayers.

Parcial reproduction of page 2 of the chronicle

...  
L'ordine di due Religiosi apostolici.  
La lettera scritta dalla Sac. Congreg. e dal tenore seguente  
Extra. S. P. Prefetto delle Missioni de' Santi in Constantinopoli.  
Intus. Ho avuto risoluta questa Sac. Congregat. di commettere  
la custodia de' greci Cattolici, che si trovano nell'Isola di Rodi  
ai Religiosi dell'ordine di S. S. Redentore a costui Caprina i P. Fr. Basilio di Pepoli, e Gio. Pietro di Vallico Sacerdote della presente, affinché  
che al loro arrivo si consenta di mantenere nella detta Isola per missionari  
due soggetti, i quali possiedono le lingue necessarie per esercitarsi  
con vitorioso profitto il loro apostolico ministero. E poiché qui si considera  
essere la detta missione più vicina a Smirna, che a costui Città,  
non si lascia di raccomandare con tutta caldeggia al P. Pier Battista di Garbagnate  
Vicario Apostolico in detta Città di Smirna, di vigilare a tutto  
ciò, che potrebbe occorrere a due Gregari, che saranno da lui designati  
per la già detta missione per risanare a loro spesa i loro bisogni.  
Scritto le stagionature. Ho a questo mi occorre motivare colla presente  
Ed alla Sac. Congreg. di cuore mi raccomando. Roma 14. Ott. 1719.  
al Piacere di V. P.  
Giuseppe Card. Acquitano  
P. L. Frail di Garbagnate

non, si comparare ad regnum in s. ...  
 in ... della lingua greca, e ...  
 con ... di ... per ...  
 ...  
 Fr. Petrus Fran: de Taurino Ord: Min: Strict: OSS: S.P.N. Fran:  
 ci Prov: ae vero Taurin: is Sac:  
 Theol: ae Lector, et Conc: or genlis,  
 Custos. Inquis: Consultor, et in hac Custodia Constantinop: ...  
 Praefectus Apolosticus et Servus. Dilecto nobis ...  
 R.P. Benedicto Sailer ab Aeniponto Prov: iae SS:mi  
 Salvatoris in Hungaria L:ri Conc:ri  
 ac Missionario Apost. co Salutem in  
 Dno Sepiternam.

Preamble of the letter of obedience to Fr. Benedict Seiler

At the orders of  
 Giuseppe Car. le Sacripante, Prefect  
 P.L. archivist di Larissa, Secretary

There is at the end of the middle  
 of the letter a P.S. of this nature.  
 It is wished that Fr. Basilio di Pepoli  
 be sent with one of his fellow reli-  
 gious considered most practical who  
 also has the necessary language for  
 the Mission in Rhodes. To give to Fr.  
 Basilio all that is considered to be  
 required for the anticipated provi-  
 sions for one year, both for himself  
 and his companion from the day of  
 their arrival in Rhodes, the sum of  
 fifty scudi was set aside for this pur-  
 pose.

It is possible to read also the  
 letter and order of the Sacred Congre-  
 gation from the hand of Most Rev.  
 Fr. Pier Francisco da Torino, Prefect  
 Apolostic in Constantinople, that they  
 would be pleased if he named Fr. Be-  
 nedetto Sailer, for sixteen years a  
 missionary in the Custody and prac-  
 ticed in the Greek language and to  
 give him the title of Vicar and Presi-  
 dent of the principal mission of Rho-  
 des. We reproduce the original Latin  
 letter:

Fr. Petrus Fran: us de Taurino  
 Ord: Min Strict: OSS: S.P.N. Fran:  
 ci Prov: ae vero Taurin: is Sac:  
 Theol: ae Lector, et Conc: or genlis,

äExdiffinitor et Custos S. mae Inquis:  
 nis Consultor, et in hac Custodia  
 Constantinop: Custos, Praefectus  
 Apolosticus et Servus. Dilecto nobis  
 plurimum in Christo R.P. Benedicto  
 Sailer ab Aeniponto Prov: iae SS:mi  
 Salvatoris in Hungaria L:ri Conc:ri  
 ac Missionario Apost. co Salutem in  
 Dno Sepiternam.

Si ubique gentium eo collimare  
 debet Superioris studium, ut dignio-  
 res inter mones elingantur, qui reli-  
 giosis famlis praefecti, regularem ob-  
 servantiam verbo, et exemplo foveant,  
 augeantque, maiori indagine, in in-  
 fidelium regionibus sibi subalternos  
 seligere debet viros, inter missiona-  
 rios Apostolos. Cum igitur Christi-  
 fidelium cultura in Insula Rhodi de-  
 gentium a Sac: Congre: ne de propa-  
 ganda fide, per sias sub 14 oct:ris  
 1719, nobis et successoribus nostris  
 damandata sit ideoque virum idoneum  
 illuc mittere debeamus, qui nova mis-  
 sionis fundamenta iaciat, et circa eius-  
 dem firmitatem stabiliat, magis ex-  
 pedire iudicaverit ad P.V.R. aciem  
 mentis direximus, cuius prudentia ze-  
 lus, et charitas nobis perspicue nota  
 est, Aucortitate igitur.

Apostolica, et ordinis, qua fun-  
 gimur, ipsum in praefato Hospitio  
 Vicarium nostrum eligimus, et nomi-  
 chum instituimus, et sic electum, no-  
 natus, insuper et illius Insula Parro-



minatum, et institutum declaramus, cum facultatibus, et praeogativis ad ea munera obeunda necessariis, precipientes in virtute Spiritus Sancti omnibus nostri ordinis religiosis, ibi commorantibus, vel illic fortasse transeuntibus ut Ipsam velut eorum legitimum superiorem recognoscant, revereanturque et in omnibus obediant, qua non sunt contra Deum, regulam, et animam suam. Valeat, Deumque pro nobis exorare meminerit. Datis e nostro Contu S. Mariae Constpl die 20 Aprilis 1720.

F. Prus Fran:us de Taurino  
Custos et Praefectus Apost.

This, briefly, says that Fr. Peter Francis de Torino etc. etc. appoints Fr. Benedict Sailer of St. Saviour in Hungary as Missionary Apostolic. He goes on to point out the need for workers in Rhodes and adds that the qualities possessed by Fr. Benedict make him an ideal man for the place. He bestows upon him all the faculties and perogatives necessary for his work in everything that is not against God, the Rule and his soul.

Having received this missive, and having been assigned Fr. Basilio da Pepoli as a companion, he departed from Constantinople on the 6th of May and after taking care of certain commissions in Smyrna and Scio he finally arrived at the island of Rhodes with his companion on the 31st of July 1720. He was received lovingly by Fr Pietro da Matera, Missionary Apostolic, also from the Custody in Constantinople, who had resided for three years in Rhodes in the service of the Consular House of M. Masse, the French Consul, and the rest of the Catholic Christians and also the galley slaves as far as he was able. He stayed on for a time and then departed for Smyrna on Aug. 21st. Fr. Benedict was afterwards received by the illustrious Consul of France, Baldasar Masse, who returned the visit

and expressed his wish to contribute for maintenance twelve loaves of bread every week, four piasters a year for the afflicted, his laundry.

They accepted the proposal with gratitude, for such an act of charity was given by nobody but he himself and when the fathers, one or the other, came to the church to say the Holy Mass, the Signore Consule would give them advice if they wished someone to intervene and also gave a little to help the school to his relative Madamoiselle Magdalena, etc.

All the other Catholic Christians showed affection and liking on the arrival of the abovementioned new missionary fathers, and as they were, however, very poor and had many needs of their own they were able to give but very little charity because of the state in which they found themselves, but they were content with their benevolence.

For their first habitation they rented a medium sized house belonging to a Greek for eight piasters a year. The house according to the local people was commodious, but for the religious use they were able to make a small apartment of two rooms for the religious, the other room being left for use as the kitchen, storeroom and refectory, etc. In order to help in the manner of providing necessities it was inperitive that they have other alms than those given by Rome. Some alms were brought from Constantinople for masses by the aforementioned Most Rev. Fr. Prefect, and others from different sources, but they they were not enough for subsistence and could not provide the necessary things for the convenience of the Religious. With the arrival of French ships they were able to request assistance and received much charity, partially in the way of vegetables and partly by offerings for Masses etc. These same captains, time and time again, when they paid their



anchorage fees would also send a piaster to the Fathers for the reason that having heard Fr. Benedict mention this (their need) in a talk with the Signor Consule, who had answered directly but changed the subject, whereupon expecting the coming of Fr. Prefect on a visit to him he proposed to settle with that authority the truth of the matter, or so seemed his intention; the Fr. Prefect Bernadino of Rome not merely with words but by other means moved the question supporting whatever charity in the way of bread etc. that could be given them; and left it arbitrarily to the local Superior to call on the help of the Signore Consule whenever he felt that he could expect aid through the help from the Lord.

We visited for the first time the little chapel of the Latins in Rhodes and gathered information, hearing from common talk that this chapel was built by Latin slaves in the time of Mazzamamma Bassa in Rhodes, about 60 years ago. In it are to be found two altars, one, somewhat larger, had a painting which represented the Blessed Virgin with St. John de Matha kneeling at her right hand and St. Roch kneeling at her left Etc. To the epistle side is a smaller altar above which is placed an image of the Blessed Virgin carved very simply from marble of which we have the following note.

On Nov. 12 in the year 1693 were to be found the poor slaves working in the city or fortress of Rhodes or in the bath and palace of Mazzamamma occupied with various labors etc. One of the slaves name Simon of the nation of Slaves went aside to urinate. He heard himself called by name and on seeking to find who had so called him he found this marble image in the ruins of a Jewish house. He quickly picked it up and brought it to his companions at the bath and they put it in a place of honor and reverence, lighting lamps etc. When

the Greeks knew this they sought by every means to take it for their church and did not wish to let the Latin slaves keep it. The Greek Metropolitan went to Bassa Mazzamamma and asked for it for his church saying it should be taken by force. But the Bassa on examining the facts and finding that the sculpture had been found in a ditch of the Latin Rite declared that the image belonged to the Latins, wherefore after a few days it was carried into the Latin church and placed on the epistle side where it can be found at present. It is related that when it arrived in the church and was visited by Greeks, a certain Greek entered the church and commenced laughing at the image and scorning it. Therefore he was immediately grievously and in an ugly way afflicted in the mouth, and knowing his fault he asked pardon but not in a perfect manner was he cured.

On the 18th. of August in the year 1742 of our Redemption it was possible to place the first stone of the church according to the Roman Ritual, which church was titled the Faneromeni Madonna of Rhodes, whose principal feast is the 8th. of October. The place was purchased from a Turk called Mustafa; and he made a contract in the presence of the Cadi with testimonials about the cost of the Turkish 'Cosetto'(?), which reposes in the Archives. After the construction of the church there was added a dwelling place with the restoration of the old house and garden consisting of community rooms, bedrooms, kitchen and rooms above the center with other improvements as are to be seen.

On Holy Thursday of the year 1737 the Most Rev. Fr. Dominic da Verdesse, Prefect Apostolic, celebrated the first mass in the presence of Fr. Michael di Bergamo, President, with all the functions proper to the Roman Ritual. And on Good Friday the above mentioned Father preached

Fra Michele di Bergamo, Superiore  
 Fra Paolo da Pavia Prefetto e Cadi  
 Li 19 Agosto dell' Anno di nostra Redenzione 1742 si  
 fece in prima pietra di questa Chiesa secondo il sito  
 Romano, intitolata in Madonna Faneromeni di Fede  
 quando da sua festa principale si è fatto, e fu  
 convegato da un Vescovo chiamato Nuptola, e si  
 fece il giorno della presenza del Cadi con testimonio  
 come costa dal Capitolo Vescovo, visto nella Chiesa.  
 Dopo la fabbrica di detta Chiesa si fece l'abito  
 delle stanze, e giardino col restauramento della  
 casa vecchia, e fabbrica de i padri communi,  
 cucina, Bombarda, e stanza sotto alla Madonna  
 con altri miglioramenti, come si vede.

Partial reproduction of page 74 of the chronicle mentions the inauguration of the church which actually is the present sacristy of S. Maria della Victoria.

the first sermon on the Passion in this church with the participation and to the common consolation of all the Latins. The enemy of the spiritual advantages was not able to weaken the ears of the Cadi, in order to impede the public functions of the church, but the visit of the Capitulare of His Most Christian Majesty presented by Signor Antonio Chemant who at this time held the office of Vice Consul, inclined the head of the Cadi and he put an end to the procedures of the others; and was

presented to the superior at the house and everything ended with the giving of small gifts of coffee, sugar etc. After finishing the essential part of the building the Most Rev. Prefect left with Fr. Michael di Bergamo on the 20th of June in the year 1743 leaving as President the Rev. Fr. Filippo da Monte Varchi. Likewise was transported the miraculous Madonna, called the Faneromeni, from the old church to the new church on March 25, 1743, carried on the shoulders of Fr. Michael da Bergamo.



*The rear of the church of S. Maria in 1975 during the work which uncovered the ancient church in the new part of the city.*

**Santa Maria della Victoria  
(Holy Mary of Victory)**

We have begun these pages with a description of the entrance of the church of Santa Maria della Victoria. Here we should mention that the church with this title is in fact the third one.

The first within the walls, in the Jewish quarter, was constructed by the Knights after the victory over the Turks in 1480. Of this there exists only a fragment of construction, possibly of the apse.

The second, as stated, was built in 1742-43 at Neohori (New City, to distinguish it from the city within the walls) and is the existing sacresty.

The third was constructed between 1849 (the corner stone being laid on Nov. 24) and the 24th. of December 1851. It is the actual existing parish church.

The church which is mentioned on page 6 of the Libro Maestro is probably the church dedicated to the Archangels (Taxiarchi) which exists not far from Santa Maria.

The story of the three churches merits a study because of the difficulties arising from the many contradictions and unpreciseness of our Chronicle and of the history of Rhodes.

Other researches are merited concerning the image carved from stone and venerated in the church of Santa Maria. On page 6 of the Libro



A tourist post-card showing the facade of the church of S. Maria.

Maestra is recounted its discovery on the part of a christian slave.

A Madonna with Child is also on the exterior of the church over the arch above the entrance. It is of majolica of the school of Robbia and was transported from the chapel of Kalamona (Perveragno, in the time

of the Italian Occupation). Below it we are able to read:

NON SIT TIBI GRAVE DICERE:  
MATER AVE

~~~~~  
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