



Inquiry: Quotation for a Life-Size Wood Carving – Historical Reconstruction (Mosta, Malta)

7 messages

Nicholas Grech <nicho.grech@gmail.com>
To: info@stuflessler.com <info@stuflessler.com>

Thu, 9 Apr 2026 at 15:19

Dear Ferdinand Stuflessler 1875,

I am writing to you to request a formal quotation for a project I am currently researching to propose to my local Parish Archpriest at Mosta, Malta.

My vision is to see the recreation of a life-size wooden statue of the Assumption of the Virgin, modeled after a specific historic statue that was once part of our town's heritage.

I have attached a high-resolution rendering of the front of the statue.

Please note the following details for the quote:

Subject: The Assumption of the Virgin, including the clouds and the two cherubs holding the veil.

Scale: Life-size (approximately 175cm – 180cm).

Medium: Hand-carved wood (finished in traditional polychromy/colors).

Note on Scope: For the purpose of this quote, please exclude the metal halo and the gilded pedestal (the very bottom base). I am interested specifically in the woodwork and the artistic carving of the main figure group starting from the clouds upward.

I would like to clarify that I am pursuing this research entirely on my own initiative, driven by a personal love for my hometown's art and cultural history. I am acting as a private individual with no commercial interest or intent for profit; my goal is simply to provide the Parish with a professional feasible study for this reconstruction.

Regarding this proposal, could you please provide:

- A preliminary price estimate for the carving and painting of this statue group based on the provided reference.
- Your thoughts on the feasibility of reconstructing the full 3D form (sides and back) based on this front-facing image.
- An estimated timeframe for completion should the project be approved by the Parish.

I intend to present your professional assessment and quotation to the Archpriest of Mosta as part of a formal proposal. I have long admired the work of your studio and believe your craftsmanship is the only one suited for a restoration of this significance.

I look forward to your professional guidance.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Grech
Mosta, Malta



Nicholas Grech <nicho.grech@gmail.com>

Tue, 14 Apr 2026 at 15:58

To: sebastian.caruana@maltadiocese.org, parrocca.mosta@maltadiocese.org, office@mostachurch.com, info@mostarotundafoundation.org, kppmosta@gmail.com, nicoloisouardbc@gmail.com, info@stmarijamosa.org, talentmosti1983@gmail.com, george.cassar@um.edu.mt

Archpriest Rev. Sebastian Caruana,

Mosta Parish,
Mosta Rotunda Foundation,
Cc:
Socjeta Filarmonika Nicolo Isouard,
Socjeta Filarmonika Santa Marija,
Ghaqda Filantropika Talent Mosti,
Prof. George Cassar,

It was just a few days ago, as we commemorated the 'Miracle of the Bomb,' that the idea returned to me: that through modern technology, we could finally recreate the old statue of Santa Marija that our village once held so dear. I researched whether it would be possible to 3D print it from the few photos we have, but since we lack photos from the side or the back, a sculptor or artist would still be needed to create those parts. This would require so much computer time and programming that the costs would end up being just as high.

Regarding the other remaining option — having it sculpted anew from wood — my thoughts immediately turned to the renowned Ferdinand Stuflesser factory, known for its various works for the Vatican. Just a few months ago, during the Christmas season and in light of the 2025 Jubilee (for which Pope Francis chose the theme "Pilgrims of Hope"), a statue from their workshop of Our Lady of Hope was installed at the Vatican. It was complete with an anchor, similar to the representation of Our Lady under this title that we have right here in Mosta, in the chapel dedicated to her.

Looking at the old statue of Santa Marija we once had, I say with sadness that you cannot look at a photo of it without feeling the grief of the masterpiece we lost. It was a masterpiece born of the talent of a Mosta local, Salvatore Dimech. As a result of the Socjeta tan-Nazzareni (Society of the Nazarenes) to which he belonged, they strove to create works of art that inspire profound devotion.

This is the kind of devotion that emanates from great works like the Redeemer of Senglea or the Crucifix of Ta' Giezu, which attract so many people that it seems the Eternal Father reciprocates by becoming an even greater source of comfort, intervening more from the heart during our troubles when we seek a miracle. Without a doubt, that old statue draws you in because it lacks nothing in such devotion; it was crafted in a natural way that is simultaneously simple, elegant, and original.

This stands in stark contrast to today's statue, which I'd go as far as to say makes a mockery of the Madonna herself — whether it's that thick cloak that looks like a sack, those shapeless sleeves, or those two angels that don't even come close to the ones on the old version. The head, taken from the original statue, makes up for it slightly to give it a bit of dignity. It is a statue that brings about anger over that bad, irreversible, and failed choice made back in 1948, when they decided to modify the original statue that we now refer to as "the old one."

Just as those in 1948 are remembered for the wound we still suffer from today — as well as for the large bell of the old church which they chose to sell for scrap metal to buy one that is practically useless because it doesn't match the rest — today's Santa Marija is equally out of tune with her surroundings. She does not inspire the admiration worthy of the place where the Eternal Father saw fit to perform one of the greatest miracles of Christianity, nor for the masterpiece of a church built through the sacrifices of a very poor people. After it took them 27 years to finish the church, only eight years later in 1868, those same people continued to exalt it with the masterpiece of that old statue we once had.

Not only was the statue the work of a man from Mosta, but it was the result of the altruism of one who, like many Mostin of his time, gave his time and labor for the glory of the village and religion; so much so that to this day, we do not know how much it actually cost. It was much like the stone sculpture work that the same sculptor, Salvatore Dimech, most probably performed for the church without any pretension. It was already a blow to the sculptor when his two stone statues on the old parvis (zuntier) were lost — the result of another regrettable decision made in 1928 when the current parvis was built. This second blow 20 years later regarding the statue of Santa Marija was a far deeper wound — finally forcing us to confront the disrespect and ingratitude shown toward one of our own, who always sought to bring honor to Mosta through his talent and his work.

Just as the Mostin of old were capable of consecrating the old church despite the expenses involved during times of great unrest — when the Order of St. John was undergoing upheaval under Grand Master Ximenes — and just as the Rotunda itself rose bit by bit through the sweat of a poor people who had nothing left to give, so can we, in the light of a looming global crisis yet amidst the luxury and materialism of today, afford this 'extravagance' to correct history and restore to Mosta the masterpiece it once had and so richly deserves.

Since its founding, Mosta has been the village of the Assumption, our forefathers having placed themselves under her absolute patronage. We ought to possess a statue that does not diminish or dishonor our village's reputation, but instead stands as a noble tribute to our community and a true honor to the Mother of God.

Therefore, inspired by a dream shared by so many Mostin — to go beyond seeing the old Santa Marija in faded photographs and instead experience the same devotion, joy and enthusiasm our ancestors felt as she emerged from the main doors of the Rotunda, carried solemnly on the shoulders of the people — I contacted Ferdinand Stuflesser. In my humble opinion, only a company with their vast experience could recreate the beauty of the original statue and serve as a fitting tribute to the legacy of its sculptor, Salvatore Dimech.

As indicated in the correspondence below, three estimates were provided: the first two for a version fitting for the new museum, and the third for a more detailed, superior version should it replace the existing statue for the Santa Marija festivities. Although the church has seen many beneficial projects and improvements lately, the dilemma regarding the current statue has yet to be resolved. It is regrettable that these funds would need to be diverted to correct a past mistake instead of being used for the church's next major endeavor. It is a price to pay to finally give rest to those who must have been turning in their graves for a long time over that bad decision, which ultimately ended in failure.

With the election approaching, it might not be difficult to obtain state aid (much like the Government intervenes to buy back an old painting that ended up abroad). Likewise, politicians and contestants might be more eager to contribute. Given the massive construction development Mosta has suffered, it might not even be difficult to find some of the many speculators who became millionaires through the construction industry to reach into their pockets for this noble cause.

The company estimates it would take about 12 months to complete. If a decision were made quickly, we could enjoy it by the 2028 feast. If that happened, by a stroke of fate, we would have had 80 years with the "old" statue (from 1868 to 1948) and exactly 80 years with the "current" one (1948 to 2028), before finally returning to a faithful copy of that masterpiece. It is worth noting that if 12 months are needed today, imagine how many more months Salvatore Dimech had to labor a century and a half ago — only for it to be reduced to its current state in just a few months due to a wrong decision.

This company is known as the "Vatican's sculptors," and owning a refined statue of theirs is a prestige in itself that attracts people. This is relevant as 2025 was the year dedicated to Hope, concluding with the Christmas festivities at the Vatican featuring the statue of Our Lady of Hope (which this same company carved in 1954 for the parish of St. John the Evangelist in Salerno). That statue was made for the Marian Year proclaimed by Pope Pius XII. It was this same Pope who, four years later on November 1, 1950, solemnly defined the Dogma of the Assumption. And four years before that, on September 22, 1946 – right in the Mosta church before that old statue of Santa Marija – the first Diocesan Congress of the Maltese Catholic Action was held. Thousands attended the solemn Mass by Archbishop Sir Michael Gonzi, after which a national petition was sent to Pope Pius XII to define the Assumption of Mary as a Dogma of Faith.

Now, imagine if in 2050, on the 100th anniversary of the Dogma of the Assumption, this statue of the Assumption – crafted by this company for our village – were to be exhibited at the Vatican instead. Imagine it standing behind whoever may be Pope at the time as he celebrates Mass for such a momentous occasion. What an honour it would be to our Mother. Imagine the renown this would bring to Mosta! It is already on the world map for its unique church, the 1913 International Eucharistic Congress, and the great 1942 miracle of the bomb. By 2050, many of us will no longer be here, but through our actions, we can write history and restore to our village a work born of Mosta's genius, truly fitting for the Assumption and the great sacrifices our forefathers made for Mosta and our Mother.

Nicholas Grech

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nicholas Grech** <nicho.grech@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, 14 Apr 2026, 15:47

Subject: Re: Inquiry: Quotation for a Life-Size Wood Carving – Historical Reconstruction (Mosta, Malta)

To: Ferdinand Stuflessner 1875 <info@stuflessner.com>

Dear Fabian,

Many thanks for your assistance. With these estimates in hand, I will be presenting this initiative to our Archpriest and the church committee to advocate for the commissioning of a new statue of the Assumption for our hometown, faithful to the original masterpiece. I have already outlined my arguments and intend to formalize my proposal to them later today.

Best regards,

Nicholas Grech

On Tue, 14 Apr 2026, 13:57 Ferdinand Stuflessner 1875, <info@stuflessner.com> wrote:

Dear Nicholas,

Thank you very much for your detailed follow-up and for providing the additional context and images. The photograph of the statue during the procession was particularly helpful in visualizing the impressive scale and presence required for the 170–180 cm figure.

I have also noted your correction regarding the design: we will ensure the cloud base features only the Madonna and the two cherubim, omitting the "Sacred Heart" symbol from the final composition.

As requested, I have prepared some rough, preliminary estimates to assist you in your discussions with the Archpriest and the church committee. Please note that these figures are **initial approximations** based on our current understanding; should the project move forward, we will need to perform a precise calculation based on final technical specifications.

Preliminary Cost Estimates

The following options represent different levels of finishing for a statue of 170cm (Mother Mary) and approx. 230cm of total height:

Finishing Option	Estimated Cost (Excl. VAT & Transport)
Option 1: Painted with Gold Accents	€ [REDACTED]

Finishing Option	Estimated Cost (Excl. VAT & Transport)
High-quality polychromy with gold lining on the mantle.	
Option 2: Gold Leaf Accents Detailed painting with gold leaf ornamentation specifically on the dress and mantle.	€ [REDACTED]
Option 3: Full Processional Polychromy Extremely rich gold leaf decoration across the entire statue for maximum impact.	€ [REDACTED]

Additional Technical Note: Surface Preparation

For a project of this artistic caliber, I highly recommend a **chalk-based priming (Gesso)** treatment before the painting process begins. This ensures a perfectly smooth surface, which is essential for the longevity and brilliance of the finish.

Due to the intricate nature of the carved garlands and clouds, this preparation is very labor-intensive. You should budget an additional **€1,000 – €1,500** for this step to ensure the highest level of craftsmanship.

Moving Forward

I hope these initial ideas provide a helpful foundation for your presentation to the committee. We would be honored to bring our artistic excellence to this significant commission for Mosta.

I look forward to hearing from you once the Archpriest and the committee have had the opportunity to review these details.

Best regards,

Fabian Kostner

I received three tier-based estimates ranging approximately from €35,000 to €50,000, depending on the materials and scale selected. I have chosen to redact the exact figures to respect the commercial sensitivity of the company's proprietary pricing.



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www.stuflessner.com

Ferdinand Stuflessner



Von: Nicholas Grech <nicho.grech@gmail.com>
Gesendet: Freitag, 10. April 2026 15:39
An: Ferdinand Stuflessner 1875 <info@stuflessner.com>
Betreff: Re: Inquiry: Quotation for a Life-Size Wood Carving – Historical Reconstruction (Mosta, Malta)

You don't often get email from nicho.grech@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Fabian Kostner,

Thank you for your prompt and detailed response regarding the statue of the Assumption. I appreciate the points you raised, as they help clarify the scope of this project.

To address your questions and provide more context, please find the following details:

- Height Specifications: Regarding the height, I am referring to the Madonna figure alone, which should be in the range of 170–180 cm. I have attached a photo of the current statue in Mosta during a procession; comparing the figure to the men carrying it should give you a better sense of the scale we are aiming for.
- Design Feedback: Regarding your edited image, everything shown is correct. However, I must point out a small correction to the AI-generated reference I sent yesterday: there is a "Sacred Heart" symbol on the cloud beneath the feet of the Madonna. This was an AI error. The final statue should simply have the Madonna and the two cherubins situated on the cloud alone, without the heart symbol.
- Finishing & Quotation Options: I would like to request two separate, preliminary quotations based on different finishing levels:
 - Painted Finish: Similar to the "Lady of Hope" statue by your firm that was displayed at the Vatican last Christmas (see other attached image). This option would be considered if the statue is intended primarily for the new museum being built behind the church.
 - Full Polychromy with Gold Leaf: A high-level finish including rich gold leaf decoration, suitable for processional use, matching the level of detail seen in the current processional statue.
- Project Scope: Please note that these quotations only need to be rough approximations at this stage. This information will be presented to the Archpriest and the church committee. Should they decide to proceed with the commission, the Archpriest will then provide the final decisions and any further technical specifications required.

I understand that a project of this magnitude is a significant undertaking requiring approximately 12 months, and I value the artistic excellence your studio provides.

I look forward to receiving your preliminary estimates.

Best regards,

Nicholas Grech





On Thu, 9 Apr 2026, 16:59 Ferdinand Stuflessner 1875, <info@stuflessner.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Grech,

Thank you very much for your kind inquiry and for your interest in our studio.

We would be glad to prepare a non-binding quotation for you. However, before doing so, we would need to clarify a few points in order to assess the project correctly.

You mention a height of 170–180 cm. Are you referring to the height of the Madonna figure alone, or to the total overall height of the entire group? If it is the total height, the Madonna herself would likely measure only around 110–120 cm.

I have taken the liberty of quickly editing the image for reference. Could you please confirm whether, in this representation, everything that should be included is shown correctly?

Could you also please let me know whether the polychromy should include the rich gold leaf decoration as well?

It would also be very helpful to know whether you have a specific budget in mind. This would allow me to tell you more quickly whether such a project is realistically feasible.

From an artistic and technical point of view, the carving and painting would certainly not be a problem for us. However, given the immense amount of work involved, this would be a highly demanding project and would therefore require a considerable investment.

For a work of this kind, we would certainly need to allow approximately 12 months for completion in order to achieve a truly perfect result.

I look forward to your reply and will then be happy to prepare a preliminary quotation for you.

Best regards,

Fabian Kostner

Ferdinand Stuflesser 1875



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www.stuflesser.com



Von: Nicholas Grech <nicho.grech@gmail.com>

Gesendet: Donnerstag, 9. April 2026 15:19

An: Ferdinand Stuflesser 1875 <info@stuflesser.com>

Betreff: Inquiry: Quotation for a Life-Size Wood Carving – Historical Reconstruction (Mosta, Malta)

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Sincerely,









Nicholas Grech

Mosta, Malta





8 attachments

-  **image003.png**
394 B
-  **image004.png**
370 B
-  **image001.png**
51 KB
-  **image007.jpg**
237 KB
-  **image008.jpg**
71 KB
-  **image005.png**
449 B
-  **image002.png**
6 KB
-  **image009.png**
1.4 MB

Ferdinand Stuflesser 1875 <info@stuflesser.com>
To: Nicholas Grech <nicho.grech@gmail.com>

Tue, 14 Apr 2026 at 16:10

Dear Nicholas,

Thank you very much for your message.

As mentioned, this is a first rough estimate, but it should nonetheless serve well as a realistic guideline for your presentation to the Archpriest and the church committee.

Thank you again for considering our workshop for such a meaningful initiative. We truly appreciate it.

Best regards,

Fabian Kostner - Ferdinand Stuflesser 1875

[Quoted text hidden]