

Vatican Museums Report

Report Volume LXII

Summer 2025

Office of Relations with the Patrons
of the Arts in the Vatican Museums



From the President of the Governorate

SR. RAFFAELLA PETRINI, F.S.E.

Dear Friends,

It is a joy for me to greet all of you for the second edition of this year's newsletter.

The joy is tangible because after the loss of Pope Francis the Lord has granted his Church a new Successor of Peter, Pope Leo XIV.

Immediately after his election, appearing from the external Loggia of the Vatican Basilica, we heard the invitation that the new Pontiff extended to the world during the first "Urbi et Orbi" blessing. He greeted the entire world asking to "walk together with you, as a united Church always seeking peace, justice".

The Vatican City State offers its complete support to walk with him, to create a culture in which respect for human dignity is a priority and not an option and where peace is built at every level, starting with daily relationships.

It is the path that I would like to share with all of you, to build a world more on a human scale where the beauty of creation and art become a paradigm for a rebirth of values which are the basis of civil coexistence.

Our objective is to remain at the forefront of innovation. We have seized the turning point of the digital transformation and in the coming years we will continue to adapt our service to the Pontiff according to the changing expectations and challenges that await us.

In particular, we will also walk together with the Pope, continuing to commit ourselves to help ease global warming by working toward energy transition within the Vatican State. This also favors the growth of a more equitable and just society considering that the most fragile and excluded are the first to suffer the consequences of climate crisis.

To build societies in which violence is no longer an option,



Sr. Raffaella Petrini with Marco Pratelli and Francesca Persegati

the role of art is fundamental because it transmits a universal message, as Pope Francis recalled, meeting about three hundred members of the Patrons of the Arts of the Vatican Museums on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of its foundation on Thursday, November 9, 2023.

Thanking you for your great generosity and for your patronage in the preservation and promotion of the heritage held in the pontifical collections, Pope Francis

underlined that art, religious art in particular, can bring "a message of mercy, compassion and encouragement not only to believers but also to those who doubt, who feel lost, uncertain or perhaps alone. Because art always speaks to the soul".

In fact, art has the power to foster "the recognition of our common humanity, to build bridges between cultures and peoples and to create that sense of solidarity that we so desperately need in our sadly divided and war-torn world. Art regenerates the human spirit, just as water regenerates the dry and arid desert".

Other Popes have also highlighted the role of art in promoting peace and extinguishing calls for war. In this regard, I recall that on the eve of the Great Jubilee of 2000, John Paul II wrote a Letter to Artists. The Pope's reference to the common good is evocative and original: artists "also provide a qualified social service for the benefit of the common good" if they are aware that there exists "an ethic, indeed a 'spirituality' of artistic service, which in its

own way contributes to the life and rebirth of a people".

Dear Patrons, your story has been inspired not only by a love of the arts but also by the certainty that there is a collective generational responsibility to safeguard and preserve the artistic, historical and religious heritage that has been entrusted to us. Art promotes universal brotherhood, unites races, cultures and peoples. Art can be understood even beyond linguistic barriers.

This is what inspires your precious work in favor of preserving the heritage of the Vatican Museums. It is with immense gratitude that I remember the important restoration works carried out throughout your history as Patrons and I am convinced that your collaboration and availability will not fail, even in the years to come.

It is with this hope that I cordially greet you and hope to soon be able to meet all of you in person here in the Vatican.



From the Director of the Vatican Museums

DR. BARBARA JATTA

Dear Patrons,

This spring has been full of memorable and emotional events.

In April, our beloved Pope Francis passed away. The funeral Mass was both intense and heartfelt. We continue to remember him in our daily prayers, as he always asked us to do. A single white rose now lies on the stone tomb that bears the name he was known by during his pontificate, *Franciscus*, reflecting his deep commitment to simplicity and humility.

In May, American Cardinal Robert Prevost was elected Pope, taking the name Leo XIV. His election was officially announced with the traditional *Habemus Papam* from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. We welcome his arrival with joy and enthusiasm.

During this Jubilee Year, and thanks to extended opening hours until 8:00 p.m., the Vatican Museums have welcomed nearly seven million visitors, including many of our Patrons. The Museums have hosted classical music concerts and special exhibitions, such as the newly arranged Miniature Mosaics section, adopted by Joe Pacetti and the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* by Giovanni Bellini, restored thanks to the generosity of the Illinois Chapter. This masterpiece is now part of the exhibition *Bellini and Sodoma: Passion of Christ* in the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo.

A special thank you to the Altig Family, who visited us in January, followed by the Illinois Chapter, led by Anne Shea, with His Eminence Cardinal Blase Cupich as a special guest.

My deepest gratitude also goes to Donna D'Urso and her friends from New York, who came to Rome to inaugurate the newly restored Room of Constantine. I extend my



sincere appreciation to the Italian and International Chapter, represented by Sabrina Zappia and Baroness Amy Gallant D'Anthonay, and to our dear Madame Solvay and the Belgium Chapter, who faithfully visit us every year.

From the Coordinator of the Office of Relations with the Patrons of the Arts

MONSIGNOR TERENCE HOGAN

My dear Patrons and friends

On April 21 we found ourselves with a profound sense of loss on the occasion of the passing of our Holy Father Pope Francis. For many of us, it was as if a member of our own family had departed this life, and yet at the same time our faith in the hope of the resurrection gave us comfort us during the days that followed. Over the years and from all around the world, our Patrons have many cherished memories of Pope Francis's acts of kindness and personal generosity.

During both our thirty-fifth and fortieth anniversary celebrations, and on many other occasions and audiences, how can we forget the kind smile and personal words of this successor of the Apostle Peter, who personally thanked us for the great work that has been accomplished by the dedication of our dear Patrons to the mission of the restoration and conservation the artistic treasures of the Vatican collections.

On November 9, 2023, before personally greeting each Patron present in the Sala Clementina, Pope Francis clearly stated: "...art always speaks to the soul. It has the power to foster a recognition of our common humanity, to build bridges between cultures and peoples, and to create that sense of solidarity so greatly needed in our sadly divided and war-torn world." He went on to say: "Art refreshes the human spirit, just as water replenishes the dry and parched desert...I renew my appreciation for your support of the mission of the Vatican Museums, and I encourage you to persevere in your praiseworthy enterprise." (cf. Greeting of His Holiness Pope Francis to PAVM).

With these words and by his deeds Pope Francis clearly understood and deeply appreciated our work and we will continue to pray that he enjoys eternal rest in the "house of the Father," who he so faithfully served in this life.

After the days of intense mourning and the activity surrounding the conclave during which voting took place in the magnificent Sistine Chapel, the world finally saw the billows of white smoke and heard the joyous pealing of the bells of St. Peter's Basilica announcing: "Habemus papam!"

Then, during the late afternoon of Thursday, May 8 the world was greeted by our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV – a native of Chicago, Illinois, his first words to the world, after being elected the 267th successor of St. Peter were: "La pace sia con tutti voi – peace be with you!"

Thus, with great jubilation and looking toward the future with hope, we pray that our work as Patrons, in union with Pope Leo XIV, will continue to "inspire, elevate and reveal..." (cf. PAVM Mission statement 2022) the deepest hopes and aspirations of the human heart for generations to come.



Thanks to Your Commitment

THESE PROJECTS ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN EVER

Ancona (Section of a Predella) with the “Crucifixion and Passion Scenes”

THE NEW YORK CHAPTER

Studies of the wooden panel revealed that in 1968, restorer G. Colalucci had carried out an urgent intervention on the painted surface, including the consolidation of the preparatory and paint layers, as well as cleaning and reintegration work. A diagnostic campaign conducted by the **Scientific Research Laboratory** subsequently identified a severe crack in the wooden support, which was addressed by restorers **Marco De Pillis** and **Massimo Alesi**. Restorer **Emilia Rizza** then focused on the painted surface: she removed the varnish from the previous restoration and performed a more thorough cleaning,



which helped to recover, among other details, the original appearance of the blackened blue drapery. In preparation for the panel's return to display in the Vatican Pinacoteca, a clima-box has been installed. The artwork will soon be moved to Room 2 of the Pinacoteca, where it can once again be admired in its newly recovered beauty.

L'Arbre de Vie

THE ITALIAN & INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER and John McCaffrey – Galileo Foundation

Regular maintenance of the Henri Matisse Room allowed for monitoring the condition of the artworks, during which a deterioration in the tension of the frames was observed. This led to the decision to intervene and modify the frames themselves. First, the restorers dusted the work using soft brushes and Kryolan sponges while the painting was still mounted on the wall. They then removed the piece and separated the two cartoons. **Paper Laboratory** restorers **Chiara Fornaciari da Passano**, **Flavia Serena di Lapigio**, and **Alessandra Terrei** worked on-site in the Matisse Room, carefully removing the Japanese paper reinforcing strips. This step allowed them to assess the materials used in the previous restoration. The new aluminum frame was created by Ditta Equilibrate. The Scientific Research Laboratory, represented by **Fabio Morresi**, **Stefania Bani**, and **Francesca Romana Cibirin**, analyzed the characteristics of the white liner. Through product

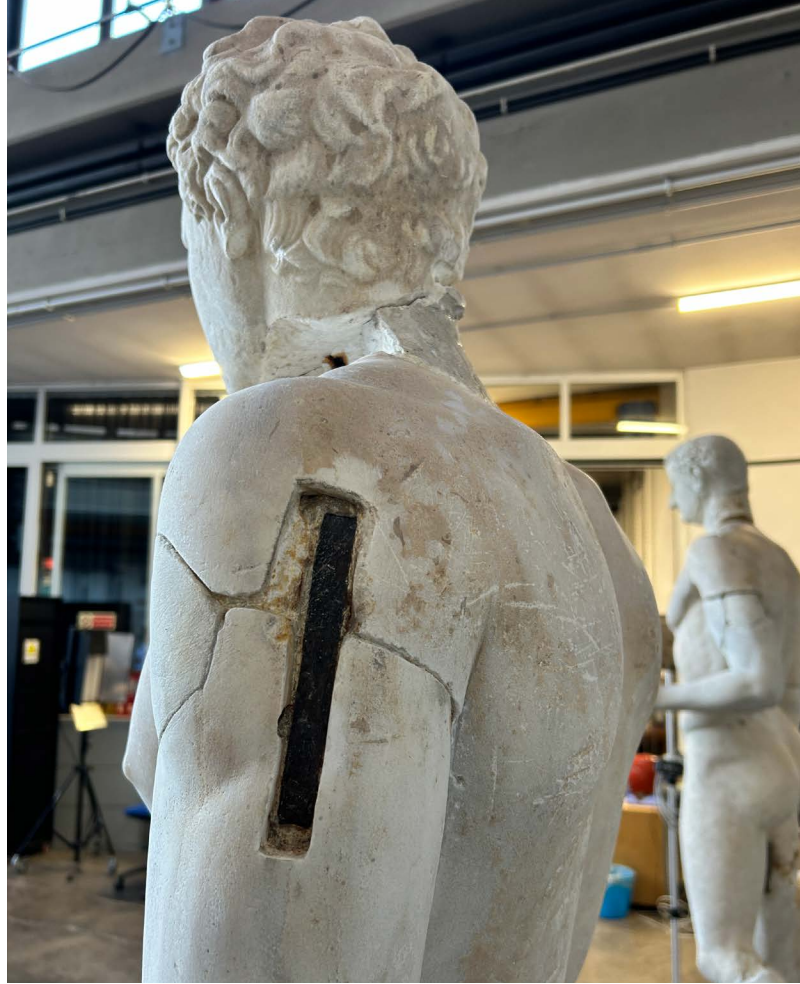


testing and spectroscopic analysis, they identified the presence of wood fibers in the Canson paper mix, which were responsible for minor brown stains on the liner. The modified frame was reassembled on-site, with corner blocks installed to prevent any stretching movements that could damage the paper. Once remounted on the wall, the final phase involved chromatic rebalancing of the edges of the two cartoons.

Fourteen statues in the Atrium of Quattro Cancelli

THE FLORIDA CHAPTER

This project, which included the restoration of marble sculptures and sarcophagi, was completed in February 2025. Many of the works were already in an advanced stage of restoration. Plastering and retouching had been completed on several pieces, while others had already been relocated to their niches in the Atrium of Quattro Cancelli. During the final stage of the project, the restorers **Kristian Schneider**, **Anita Negri** and **Giuseppe Ciralo** focused on the *Hercules at Rest* statue, which was cleaned and had its right arm reassembled after it had detached during handling. The last of the sarcophagi was cleaned using a combination of procedures tailored to its specific characteristics. Due to the size of the Sarcophagus with Glyphs, the Directorate of the Vatican Museums decided to transfer it to the Gregorian Profane Museum. In its place, a smaller sarcophagus will be installed at the base of the Simonetti Staircase.



Micromosaics

Joe Pacetti

The project involved the restoration of micromosaics with metal elements and the reorganization of the entire collection in new display cases, integrated into 11 cabinets in the Pauline II Gallery. Previously housed in the rooms of the Pius V Apartment, many of the works had double-sided adhesive on the back, which had to be mechanically removed using ketone solvents. All metal elements were cleaned to remove residues from previous interventions. Where possible, the woodworking company reinforced the frames. A new display has been designed for the Pauline II Gallery.

The micromosaics were organized by type (jewelry, snuff boxes, paperweights, monuments, and series) to enhance clarity and visual coherence. Once restorer **Barbara Pinto Folicaldi** verified the proper positioning of the objects, and the head restorer **Roberto Cassio** checked the wooden components, the curator finalized an arrangement that ensured harmony in the overall composition.



Ongoing Restorations

THESE PROJECTS WILL BE COMPLETED SOON

Compartment of a Predella with Episodes from the Life of the Virgin, Flight into Egypt

NEW YORK CHAPTER

Work began with the **Scientific Research Laboratory** conducting imaging studies to help determine the restoration plan. The containment system from a previous restoration in the 1970s no longer allowed for the natural movement of the wood. As a result, restorers **Marco De Pillis** and **Massimo Alesi** from the **Painting and Wood Laboratory** installed a new system, after which restoration of the painting's surface began.

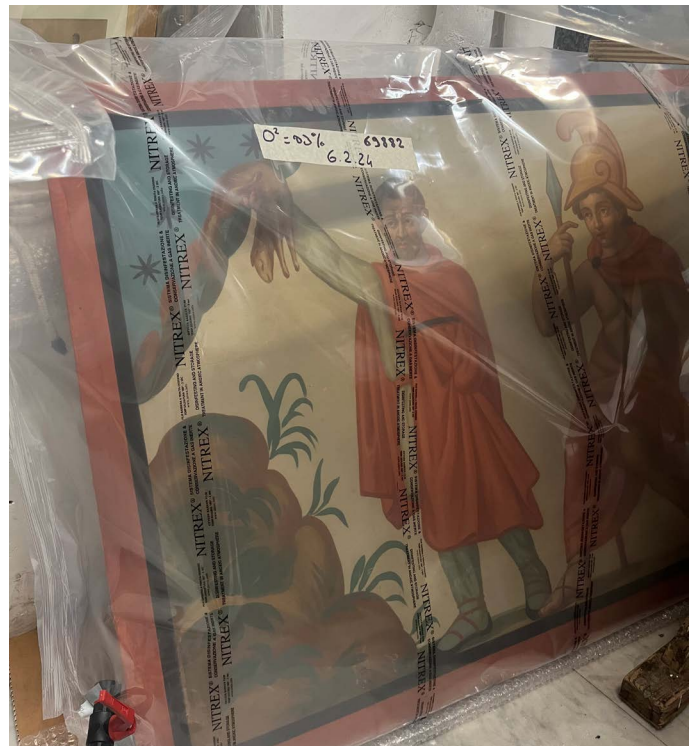
Restoration of Copies of the Paintings in the Roman Catacomb

THE TEXAS CHAPTER – Richard Kelly

In the 19th century, several painters specializing in reproductions, including Carlo Ruspi and Silvestro Bossi, produced 34 facsimile paintings of frescoes from the catacombs. These works are considered unique documentation, as they are closely connected to early Christian archaeological discoveries. Five of these cartoons from the Christian catacombs were found in poor condition, exhibiting surface deposits, insect droppings, and various stains. Following a photographic campaign conducted by the **Scientific Research Laboratory**, paper restorers **Chiara Fornaciari da Passano**, **Flavia Serena di Lapigio**, and **Alessandra Terrei** began treatment with dry cleaning and consolidation of the paint layer. During the restoration, a serious entomological infestation was discovered in the wooden frame of one of the cartoons. This required immediate intervention by the **Conservator's Office**, the **Scientific Research Laboratory**, and the **Logistics Office** to inspect other works in storage and initiate an emergency anoxic disinfestation treatment.



Restorer **Federica Runco** successfully removed the old varnishes, adhesives, and retouches from the earlier intervention, revealing the artist's rich palette and painting technique. Next, old fillers were eliminated, and a light protective varnish was applied to safeguard the work during the subsequent crack repair process. The restoration will now focus on homogenizing the color fields in preparation for retouching.



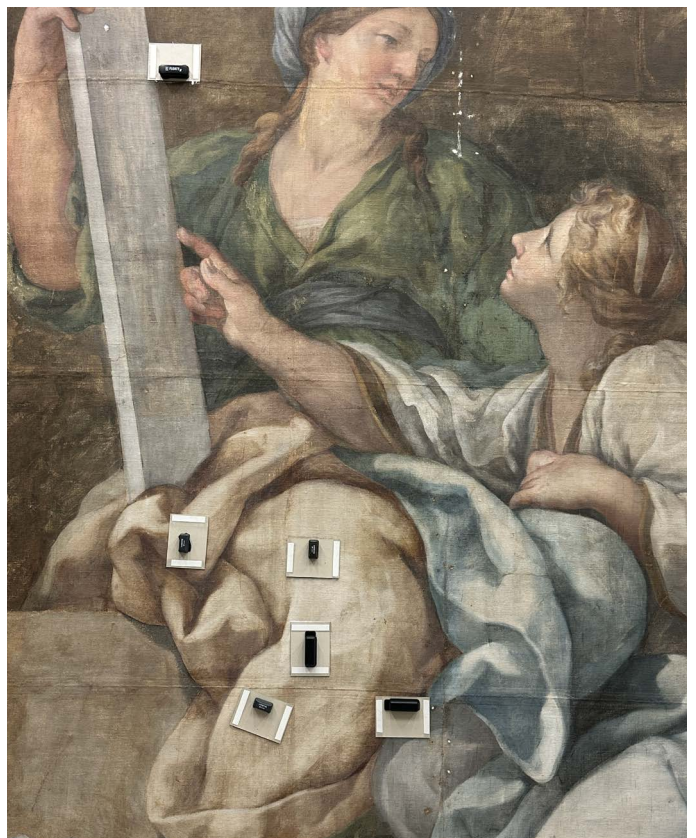
The restoration is now continuing with the adhesion of lifted areas near the frame and color adaptation using pastels and powdered pigments.

The Cumaean Sybil

THE NORTHWEST CHAPTER – Rick and Lisa Altig

The large painting canvas served as the cartoon used by Fabio Cristofori for the mosaics in the Chapel of the Most Holy Crucifix in St. Peter's Basilica. Restoration work began in January 2025, starting with the removal of damaged protective layers and the use of an ultraviolet lamp to identify areas in need of repainting and treatment.

Diffuse abrasions were discovered on the pictorial layer, previously hidden beneath retouching. The conservator also uncovered two different types of plaster from earlier restorations. **Francesca Cencia**, the restorer, decided to remove both the plaster and the heavy, visible repainting, replacing them with a new plaster layer subtly retouched using distinguishable linear tones. With the aid of corresponding mosaic images, the restoration team **Painting and Wood Laboratory**, led by **Francesca Persegati**, was able to accurately reconstruct the arrangement of the drapery folds. The next phase of the restoration will focus on the reintegration of the pictorial.



Two New Showcases in the Christian Museum – Library Area

THE ITALIAN & INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER – Robyn and Kingsley Munday

This walnut-wood display case (number 2 in a series of 6) bears the coat of arms of Pope Pius IX. It was originally made for the founding of the Pio Christian Museum in the Lateran Palace in 1854 and was later moved to the Apostolic Library in the Vatican Museums in 1999. At its current location, the display cases have been exposed to significant sunlight, which has damaged their varnish. The first phase of treatment involved an anoxic process to eliminate any woodworm infestation. Restorers **Marco De Pillis** and **Massimo Alesi** then focused on structural restoration, addressing the cracked lining on the underside of the case. Missing carvings were reconstructed and filled in, and the old silicone edging was removed and replaced with more suitable materials. The most challenging aspect of the restoration was the removal of the old varnish, which was carried out using specially formulated solvent gels.



Chapter Visits

Since the beginning of the Jubilee Year, the ORPAVM has been blessed to welcome many Patrons—both on daily visits and through Chapter and group visits —to the Vatican.

In January, we welcomed a group of young patrons from the **Northwest Chapter**, accompanied by the **Altig Family**. During their visit, we retraced many major restoration projects generously funded by this long-standing Patrons' family over the years, from the pictorial masterpieces of the Painting Gallery to the majestic bronze sculpture of *Ercole Mastai*, along with statuary works from the Pio Clementino Museum.

At the end of January, the **Illinois Chapter** visited Vatican City State and all four major Papal Basilicas as part of their Jubilee pilgrimage: St. Peter's, St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, and St. Paul Outside the Walls. They also had the opportunity to visit several Vatican Museums venues, with a special stop at the *Tunic of Saint Peter*, whose recent restoration was inaugurated in the presence of H.E. Cardinal Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, Rev. Sr. Raffaella

Petrini, Dr. Barbara Jatta, and Mons. Terence Hogan. At the end of February, the **New York Chapter** travelled to the Vatican to attend the inauguration event celebrating the completion of the restoration of the *Constantine Room*. The Patrons also visited the temporary exhibition at the Apostolic Palace in Castel Gandolfo, which featured the *Adoration of the Magi* project sponsored by the NY Chapter, among other artworks. The NY Patrons also had the opportunity to admire the final restoration of the *Ducal Hall* in the Apostolic Palace, made possible once again thanks to their generosity.

In May, the European Patrons of the **Italian & International Chapter**, as well as the **Belgium Chapter**, also visited and participated in a special conference held by curators and restorers on their adopted restoration project: *Madonna of Kazan and Saints* (comprising two travel triptychs and one icon).

The ORPAVM thanks all the Patrons who visited and looks forward to welcoming more groups this fall. See you soon!



From left: Mons. Terence Hogan, Sr. Raffaella Petrini, Director Barbara Jatta and Rick and Lisa Altig in the Round Hall



The Illinois Chapter in the Blessing Hall of the Apostolic Palace



From left: restorer Fabio Piacentini, Atty. Giuseppe Puglisi-Alibrandi, Sr. Raffaella Petrini, Donna D'Urso and Lisa D'Urso (NY), Director Barbara Jatta, Mons. Terence Hogan, curator Fabrizio Biferali and head restorer Francesca Persegati at the inauguration of the Constantine Room



The Italian & International Chapter during the visit of the Gallery of the Maps with the guide Vincenzo Trimboli



The Belgium Chapter with Sr. Raffaella Petrini and Mons. Terence Hogan in the Chapel of the Governorate

Patrons in the Vatican

OUR DAILY VISITS



The Rustandy Family with Sr. Raffaella Petrini in the Governorate Palace



From left: Guide Elena Leggeri, patron Dinah Calderon (CA&NW) and restorer Alessandra Zarelli in the Painting and Wood Laboratory



From left: Mons. Terence Hogan with Donna Nelson Stride (IL) and her family



Jan Reveley and Dave Carlson (FL) in the PAVM office



Kenneth Chang and Family (ASIA) with Mons. Terence Hogan



The Hale Family and the Michigan Chapter Patrons with Mons. Terence Hogan



From left: guide Barbara Giombetti, Maria and Jim Ruddock (OH) with Mons. Terence Hogan



Holly Profit (CA&NW) and Family in the Round Hall



Lindy Nieuwpoort, guide Sara Bongiolami, Jeffrey Paul and Elba Maria Hildebrant (CANADA)



Restorer Francesca Cencia and Claudia Burns (MI) in the Painting and Wood Laboratory



From left: Chiara Lorenzetti, Mariko Ikehara and Jeffrey Cunard (CA&NW), Martina Suozzo, Annarita Imperio and Lindy Nieuwpoort in the PAVM office



Patrons Julie Ashley, Susan Copeland, Loulie Crawford, Paola Casey, Lisa and John Hockin (CA&NW) with guide Christine Balzamonti



Sara Tan and Family (ASIA) in the PAVM office



Mons. Terence Hogan with Lisa and Adrian Pincever (FL)



The Frost Family and the Torina Family (NY) in the Vatican Gardens



Michael and Vanessa Benesh (Canada) in the Vatican Gardens

Bellini and Sodoma. Passion of Christ

APOSTOLIC PALACE OF CASTEL GANDOLFO – OPEN UNTIL SEPTEMBER 7TH, 2025

In April, the Directorate of Museums and Cultural Heritage, in collaboration with the Directorate of the Pontifical Villas, presented the exhibition “*Bellini and Sodoma. Passion of Christ.*” On the lower floor of the Apostolic Palace, two extraordinary works are on display: *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* by Giovanni Bellini (c. 1440–1516), and *Dead Christ* by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Il Sodoma (1477–1549). Curated by Fabrizio Biferali, Head of the Department of 15th–16th Century Art, the exhibition explores the theme of the Passion of Christ—at the heart of Christian tradition and a symbol of Jesus’s sacrifice for the redemption of humanity. The restoration intervention was preceded by a series of investigations carried out by the Scientific Research Laboratory of the Vatican Museums. The pictorial restoration was conducted by Marco Pratelli in the Painting and Wood Laboratory, under the direction of Head Restorer Francesca Persegati. The restoration of Bellini’s *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, an oil on panel, was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Illinois Chapter.

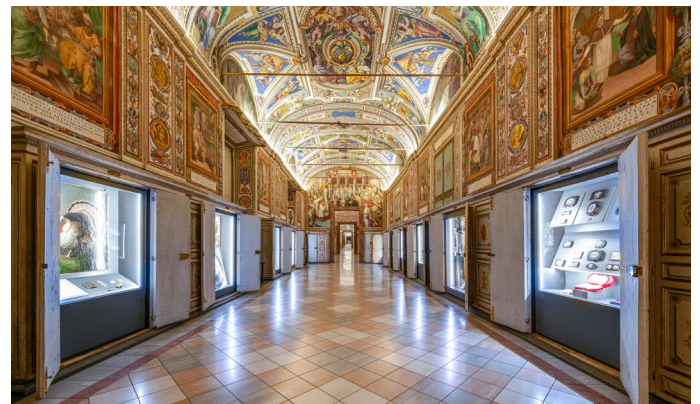


Lamentation over the Dead Christ by Giovanni Bellini

Nostalgia and Invention. The Micromosaics Collection of the Vatican Museums

VATICAN MUSEUMS – PERMANENT EXHIBIT

On May 16th, in the stunning setting of the Braccio Nuovo, the Vatican Museums unveiled a new presentation of their Miniature Mosaics Collection. This refined artistic form has deep roots in the history of Saint Peter’s Basilica, where the Vatican Mosaic Studio was founded at the end of the sixteenth century. The Vatican Museums’ collection transforms enamel tesserae, each just a few millimeters long, into delicate yet powerful works of art. The micromosaics appear on tobacco boxes, paperweights, pins, and jewelry, depicting archaeological views, the Roman countryside, iconic Christian monuments, as well as animals and flowers. The updated display was introduced by Sr. Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E., President of the Governorate of Vatican City State, Barbara Jatta, Director



of the Vatican Museums, art historian Alvar González-Palacios, and Luca Pesante, Head of the Decorative Arts Department. The restoration of the collection was made possible thanks to the generous support of patron Joe Pacetti.

From Raphael to Laureti

THE RESTORATION OF THE HALL OF CONSTANTINE

In February, an exclusive pre-inauguration of the Room of Constantine was held in the presence of the New York Chapter. A select group of Patrons—led by Donna and Lisa D’Urso, Mark Villamar, and Esther Milsted—enjoyed unforgettable days in Rome and the Vatican, immersed in history, art, and restoration excellence.

The highlight of their visit was the unveiling of the recently restored frescoes, presented in the presence of Sr. Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E., Giuseppe Puglisi-Alibrandi, and Barbara Jatta. The intricate restoration work and rich iconography of the room were brought to life through insightful commentary by curator Fabrizio Biferalli, chief restorer Francesca Persegati, and restorer Fabio Piacentini, together with the skilled team from the Scientific Research Laboratory, led by Fabio Morresi. The official press presentation followed on June 26th, offering a deeper look into the years of dedication behind the project. Stunning images revealed the results of detailed scientific analysis and illustrated the complex restoration process carried out over nine years on the scaffolding—an extraordinary journey of art, science, and devotion that breathed new life into one of the Vatican’s most storied spaces.



Unveiling of the recognition by Sister Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E., Donna D’Urso, Barbara Jatta and Mons. Hogan



From left: Sabrina Oliva, Federica Moretti, Carine Heniger, Maria Maddalena Santoro, Chiara Munzi, Francesca Persegati, Donna D’Urso, Fabio Piacentini, Laura Romani



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