



«Avvisi» dalla Vaticana

The Vatican Library during the time of the Coronavirus

There is something happening that we never could have imagined, and it has changed not only our habits, but our way of thinking. Born from afar, the notorious Covid-19 quickly reached more countries and tightened its grip with a devastating force in Italy and then in other European countries. After the uncertainty of the first days, it became clear that the invisible enemy was spreading at an alarming pace, and thus in order to protect the health of all the authorities of the Library, visits, television footage and other activities were suspended as of March 4; entry to scholars was barred soon thereafter.

The authorities of the Holy See have issued various regulations to prevent the spread of the virus. Now most of our staff work from their homes in IT modes arranged for work by proxy and the Library is open and functioning with the least possible number of employees in order to guarantee some essential services. These include all the services that allow access from afar, so that scholars can continue to consult our catalogs and study all our digitized collections: manuscripts, incunabula, graphic materials and art objects, coins and medals, archives, inventories. It is difficult to predict when it will be possible to return to our Library, and all updates will be indicated on our website.

The situation is certainly difficult, but our thoughts and our hearts go out to the people who are suffering from Covid-19 in the various parts of the world, to the thousands of families of those who have died, and to all the medical and paramedic staff working to treat the sick and to reduce the effects of the global epidemic.



“There are tiny gestures, which are sometimes lost in the inconspicuousness of daily life. Gestures of tenderness, of affection, of compassion, which are nonetheless decisive and significant.”

“We must rediscover the concrete nature of the small things, of small attentions that we might have towards those who are nearby, our relatives and friends. Keep in mind that in the small things lies our treasure.”

Pope Francis

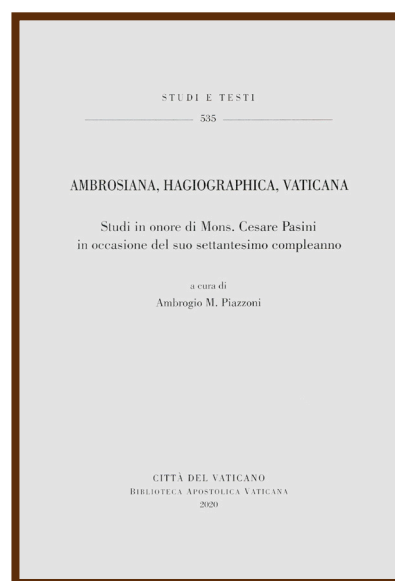
For the seventieth birthday of Msgr. Cesare Pasini

On February 3 the prefect of the Library, Msgr. Cesare Pasini, turned seventy years old. After the celebration of Holy Mass attended by the entire Vatican Library community in the church of Santo Stefano Protomartire, we had a short ceremony for don Cesare in the Vestibule of the Library, organized to extend our greetings and present him with a Festschrift volume fresh off the press, edited by the vice prefect, Ambrogio M. Piazzoni.

The book, entitled *Ambrosiana, Hagiographica, Vaticana*, offers twenty-five contributions that quite diversely refer to the most significant moments and studies of the life of scholar Msgr. Pasini. They constitute “a mapping out of the geographies he chose in the field of knowledge.” In such auspicious circumstances, the prefect of the Apostolic Archives, H.E. Msgr. Sergio Pagano, the vice prefect Paolo Vian, and Barbara Jatta, director of the Vatican Museums, joined the Library staff to accompany us in the celebration for Msgr. Pasini.

In introducing the volume, the Librarian, H.E. Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça, chose to emphasize what is shared by the whole community: “in Msgr. Pasini, whether it be his way of governing, his deepening of scholarship or his writing, each element is truly inseparable from his vocation and mission.”

Ad multos annos!



Barbara Jatta conferred the Order of the Polar Star



On the afternoon of January 30, there was a ceremony to confer the Order of the Polar Star on Barbara Jatta, director of the Vatican Museums. The ceremony was hosted by the headquarters of the historic Swedish Institute in Rome. For twenty years, Dr. Jatta had held the position of head of the Prints Cabinet of the Apostolic Library.

Dr. Ulf R. Hansson, director of the Institute, and H.E. Mrs. Cecilia Björner, Sweden's ambassador to the Holy See, welcomed the guests and gave a short welcome speech.

In the presence of the ambassador emeritus, Fredrick Vahlquist, and the kind Mrs. Elizabeth, the prefect of the Library, Msgr. Cesare Pasini, family members, friends and colleagues of Dr. Jatta, the Order's chancellor, Prof. Svante Lindqvist, gave her the high recognition.



B. Jatta and C. Björner

The Order of the Polar Star (Nordstjärneorden), of ancient origin, had over time fell into disuse but was reinstated in 1748 by Frederick I of Sweden. It is currently granted to members of the Royal Family and to foreign citizens for acts of devotion and distinction made towards Sweden.

The reasons for the award were read by Mrs. Björner, who stated: "Sweden is grateful to Barbara Jatta for the collaboration that has been taking place between Sweden and the Vatican Apostolic Library for many years now. She opened the doors to Swedish researchers and welcomed study groups, strengthening the cultural link between Sweden and the Vatican."

A particularly touching moment that extends above and beyond *Ledamöter* Barbara Jatta.

Congratulations to our "former" colleague!



The day after the beautiful ceremony, Prof. Lindqvist and the kind Mrs. Catharina, accompanied by H.E. Mrs. Björner, visited the historical rooms of the Library.

During the visit it was possible to show the guests some documents particularly important for Swedish history and culture, which they examined with special interest.

These include the so-called *Catalog of Antwerp* (Vat. lat. 8171), made in that city and relating to the book collection that accompanied Christina of Sweden on her journey from Stockholm toward Rome, later purchased by Card. Pietro Vito Ottoboni (1610-1691), now preserved in the Vatican Library; and the collection of prints, *Suecia antiqua et hodierna*, by Erik Dahlberg (1625-1703), printed in three volumes between 1667 and 1713, which contains 353 engravings of splendid views of Swedish cities and beyond, with ports, inlets, and monuments. This is Sweden's most famous architectural and topographical documentation from the age when it was one of the major countries in Europe.



Digitization of Korean coins from the Vatican medal collection

Thanks to the support of the government of the Republic of Korea, a project is underway for the study and enhancement of the collections preserved in the Apostolic Library that either come from Korea or are pertinent to Korea. An agreement was settled between the Library and the Korean Conference of Bishops last September, signed by H.E. Msgr. Higinus Kim and by the Librarian, H.E. Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça (see OWL, n. 11, p. 10). The work is conducted by three researchers, Maria Bozga, Antonella Di Domenico and Romina Di Vita and coordinated by Rosaria Sooyun Park. It involves all the materials preserved in the Library that are related to the Korean civilization. His Excellency Kim, a history scholar himself, believes that “the ‘human wisdom’ preserved in the Library can greatly improve research aimed at the development of humanity. At the same time, it may share relevant historical data with many researchers by archiving the digital and information related to the images. The Vatican Library is a ‘treasure chest of history’ for all scholars around the world and for our Catholic Church, so I think it requires global attention and support. We hope that the initiative regarding the history of relations between Korea and the Holy See will develop into a mutually beneficial relationship, as well as an important project by which to better understand and organize relations between the Holy See and the Korean Catholic Church, as well as between the Holy See and the Republic of Korea.”

As part of the project, Korean coins were recently digitized: the collection, which consists of over one hundred pieces, was created in different moments. Some of the coins were donated by missionaries to Pius IX in 1874 and others come from the acquisition (1902) of what remained of the Propaganda Fide medal collection, which belonged to Card. Stefano Borgia (1731-1804). Until now these have only been referred to as “Far Eastern currencies.” These are mainly Sang P’yng T’ong (with unvarying currency) in copper or brass alloy introduced in Korea in 1633 and remaining in use until 1891.



Mt. Corea. 51



Mt. Corea. 23



Mt. Corea. 11



Mt. Corea. 43



Korean coins are sought after by collectors even if the legend on the front side has remained unchanged for quite some time, because the back side has many different combinations of numbers and characters (with about 5000 variations), which change according to how state agencies have issued them over the centuries and the mints that have pressed them. The collection also includes some amulets, cataloged along with the coins according to the Chinese tradition by which the Korean coinage has been inspired.

While the coins have never been studied before, thanks to the new project, they are now available on the Library website in the Catalog of coins and medals and will be published in the annual medal magazine, "Historia Mundi."

The long and deep bond of friendship with Korea has also been strengthened through the deepened knowledge of the documents related to Korea that are preserved in the Vatican Library. The Holy See first recognized the Republic of Korea (founded on August 15, 1948) as an independent country before the approval of the United Nations. The bond was also created thanks to the action of the future pope John XXIII.

When the United Nations General Assembly was held in Paris in the winter of 1948 for the approval of the Korean State, Angelo Roncalli, Apostolic Nuncio to France from 1944

to 1953, helped the Korean delegates to meet and negotiate with the foreign delegations. In 1962 pope Roncalli made sure that a system of teaching governed by the local Church was created within the Korean Catholic hierarchy. Also, the future Pope Paul VI, Giovanni Battista Montini, in January 1949, while he was undersecretary of the Section for Relations with States, helped the Korean representatives who came to participate in the third session of the United Nations Council by confirming the recognition of the Korean nation on the agenda. Without the contribution of the two future popes, it would have been difficult for the Republic of Korea to obtain UN approval as an independent state. And the intervention of the United Nations during the Korean War in June 1950, by sending forces in support of the Republic and the consequent timely armistice agreement and ceasefire, prevented the need for further sacrifices to be made.

With the initiative recently put into effect, originating from the meeting of the President of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in, with the Holy Father, and with the support of the ambassador to the Holy See, H.E. Joseph Baek Man Lee, both sides work for the full realization of the project. We hope for an ever greater closeness between the two states, which are already less distant than the geographical distance indicates.

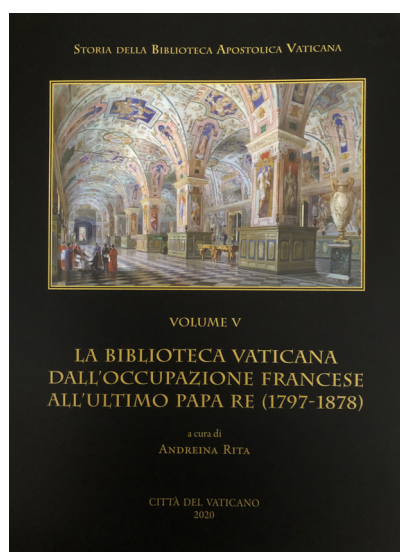
New windows in the Julius II's wing



The construction was completed on the whole southern wing of the Cortile del Belvedere, known as of Julius II, aimed at replacing the large windows along the stacks for printed books. The sequence of work planned for this first phase of the project for the installation of the air conditioning system on the six floors of the building was followed.

In that area of the Library are not only the collections of printed books, including the most valuable, but also the Graphic Cabinet with its collections of drawings, prints, geographical maps, matrices and photographs, and the Archives Section, with its extraordinary collection of documents of families whose library collections are preserved in the ancient Institution, such as Barberini and Chigi. With the start of the new phase of construction, we take this opportunity to thank the Sanctuary of Culture Foundation once again for its vital and continual support.

Publication of the fifth volume of the History of the Library



On the cold afternoon of February 6, the Lapidary Gallery welcomed a warm crowd of guests gathered for the presentation of the fifth volume of the *History of the Vatican Apostolic Library*, edited by Andreina Rita: *The Vatican Library from the French occupation to the last papal king (1797-1878)*.

The volume is composed of a series of sections that follow the historical context of events, which blend with the events of the Institution and its collections, as the spaces of the venerable papal Library increase.

The more than forty scholarly contributions offer readers a detailed picture of one of the most troubled and fruitful periods of the history of the Library.

From the *Treaty of Tolentino* (February 17, 1797), imposed by General Bonaparte on Pius VI to the death of Pius IX, the last sovereign pontiff, in 1878, every aspect of institutional life is addressed in this work. From the staff to studies, from the collections, with additions and dispersions, to the organization of the spaces, to the ways in which the outside world came into contact with the Institution, the story from the perspective of the persons who led the Library, no essential moment has been overlooked.

The proposal to reconstruct the history of the Institution, also with an aim toward imagining its future, came about during the three-year structural work that ended just ten years ago. This was a difficult period with many struggles, but one that has enabled us to set out sights farther ahead with the confidence of being ready to face new challenges with new tools, and to be able to count on a strength built on solid foundations, still only partially known.

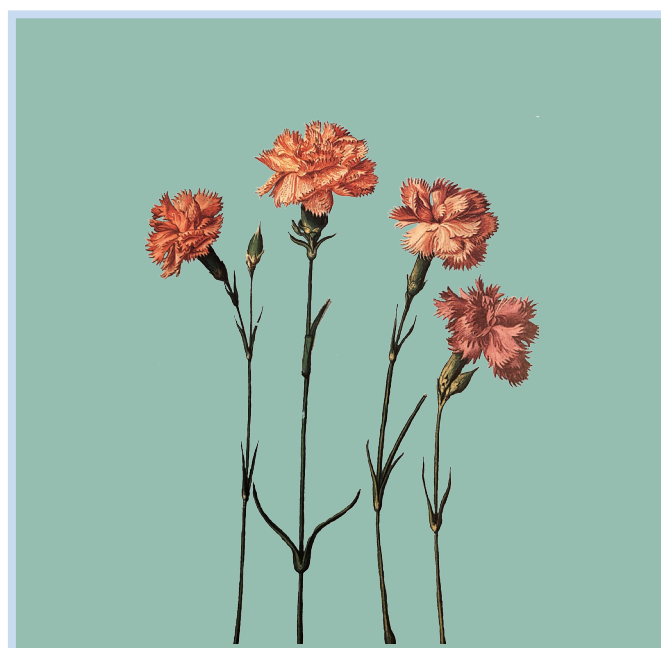
In this light, the massive volume just published offers first-hand material in a tone created for broad distribution, like the previous ones. Such material has been mainly preserved in the archives of the Library itself and constitutes a “fundamental stage in the self-understanding of our history, a constant discovery, first of all for ourselves,” but which we can and want to share.



«And after an absence of maybe two years, all of a sudden they found themselves to be far more friends than they ever knew themselves to be when they saw each other almost every day; because each of them [...] felt what makes one feel how much kindness is like balm for the spirit; both that which one has in oneself and that which one finds in others.»

A. Manzoni (1785-1873)

I promessi sposi (*The Betrothed*), XXXIII, 518-523



Portraits of Siamese ambassadors in a Vatican codex

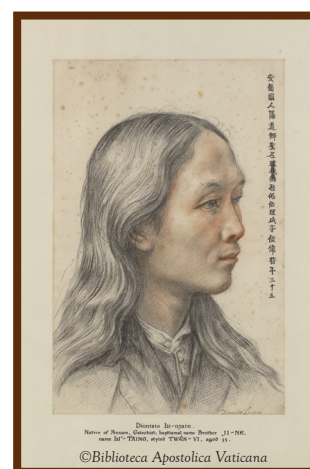
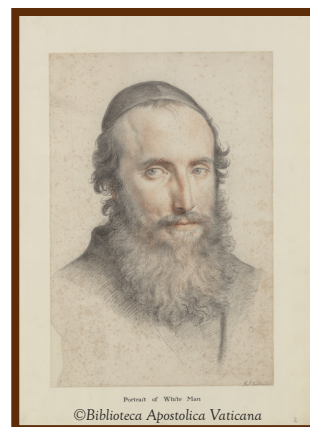
The codex *Vat. lat.* 14166 was recently published on the digital library website. It is a manuscript containing seven portraits made by the Marches painter Carlo Maratti (or Maratta, 1625-1713). The first portrays Guy Tachard, a Jesuit missionary, born in Angoulême on April 7, 1651. In about 1680 Tachard accompanied Marshal d'Estreées to South America and stayed there for about four years. In 1685 he went to Siam together with the French ambassador, M. de Chamont. Later, when the king of Siam sent ambassadors to the pope and to king Louis XIV, they were accompanied by Tachard, who served as interpreter and adviser. The six other portraits are likely those of the ambassadors, who converted to Catholicism, as the captions report. Guy Tachard died in Bengal on October 21, 1712.

The codex was given to Pope Pius XII on the occasion of the inauguration of the funeral monument in memory of Card. Willem van Rossum in Wittem, the Netherlands, by Count and Countess W. J. R. Dreesman-Peek, on May 22, 1939. The cardinal resided and taught theology in Wittem, where he had been ordained a priest.

Willem Marinus van Rossum (1854-1932), a Redemptorist missionary, who was raised to the cardinalate in 1911, was a member of many congregations, including that of the Doctrine of the Faith (the Holy Office), that of the Council, of the Eastern Churches, of Religious, of Propaganda Fide and of the Seminaries. He was president of the Pontifical Institute of Saints Peter and Paul and of Saints Ambrose and Charles for foreign missions and for 14 years he was prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. He was responsible for the reorganization of the archives of the Congregation.

During his office, in 1927, the International Agenzia Fides was established for the dissemination of missionary news, initiating studies on the conditions of the missions and “on the religious and social subjects of the missions themselves.”

The Redemptorist confreres pointed out to him that “if his heart had a preference, it certainly was for the indigenous clergy. He saw too well how the surest hopes for the future of the Church in the missions should be placed on indigenous clergy.” Recalling the cardinal who died on August 31, the November 1932 issue (11) of the Salesian Bulletin underlined his role as “a faithful and intelligent interpreter of the missionary spirit of the August pontiff [...]; he gave Propaganda Fide all the ardor of its activity in its organizing, illuminated and generous form. All missionaries scattered throughout the various Catholic missions will be grateful to him.”



The collection of incunabula is enriched with five rare specimens

During 2019, the impressive collection of Vatican incunabula was enriched with five precious editions printed in Italy and Germany. The first is a rare edition of the *Legenda Aurea* printed in Milan by Ulrich Scinzenzeler, on June 15, 1497. The *Legenda Aurea* is a medieval hagiographic collection composed in Latin by the Dominican Jacobus da Voragine, bishop of Genoa.

The work was composed starting from the year 1260 until the author's death in 1298. This textual typology spread widely in the Middle Ages and beyond, in different forms, both extended and abbreviated. The editorial fortune of the fifteenth-century vulgarization, edited by the Camaldolese monk Nicolò Malerbi, brought great fame to the author until the end of the sixteenth century. The work still constitutes an indispensable reference for understanding the meaning of the symbolism and iconography present in religious paintings, of which this edition, *in folio*, stands as a precious witness. Numerous woodcut vignettes illustrate its contents in a simple but evocative style.

Until 2018, four copies of this edition were known, kept at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, at the University Library of Genoa, the Library of San Paolo in Rome, and the National University Library of Turin. The fifth copy, from the private Fagiolo Collection, is now kept in the Apostolic Library and bears the shelfmark Inc. III. 557. Professor Enzo Fagiolo donated it in November 2019 (see OWL 12, p. 6).

The other four religious incunabula were printed in Germany.

The first contains the *Sermones de sanctis* of the preacher Iordanus de Quedlinburg, who lived in the fourteenth century. The text in Gothic characters was printed in Strasbourg by Johan Grüninger on March 28, 1484; it is a folio volume. The Vatican witness, Inc. III. 554, has old annotations and signatures dating back to the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

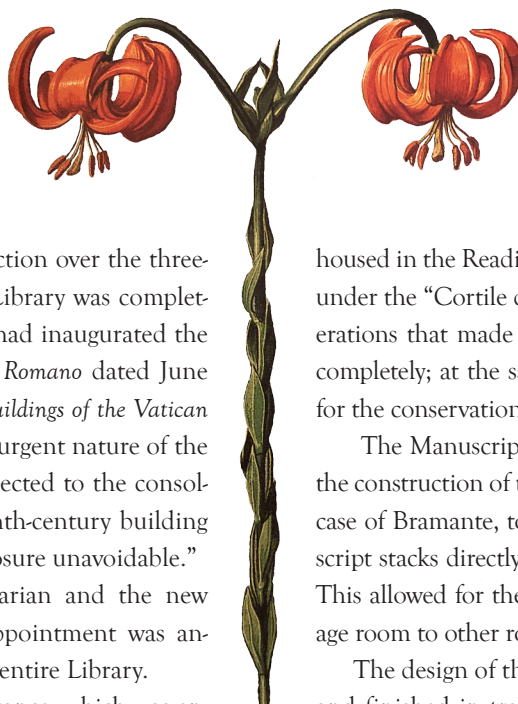
The second incunabulum corresponds to a work of the Austrian theologian Johan Nider, entitled *Sermones de tempore*. Nider played an important role in supporting the reformation of Catholicism both in the Council of Constance and Basel. The incunabulum *in folio* (Inc. III. 555) was printed in Reutlingen by Michael Greyff no later than 1480, the year of the printer's death. The Vatican witness has a half leather binding decorated with embossed friezes.

The third incunabulum (shelfmark Inc. III. 556) contains the martyrology, *Viola sanctorum*, printed *in folio* in Basel by Bernhard Richel around 1474.

The fourth German incunabulum (shelfmark Inc. IV. 986) is the *Lavacrum conscientiae*, attributed by some to the Carthusian theologian Iacobus de Gruytrode; it was printed in Augsburg by Anton Sorg in 1492 and engraved with woodcut initials. The volume has a reused binding consisting of a fragment of a handwritten parchment sheet written in Gothic minuscule. The prestigious collection of Vatican incunabula, among the largest in the world, continues to grow *pro communi doctorum virorum commodo!*



Ten years since the restructuring of the BAV



Ten years have passed since construction over the three-year period from 2007 to 2010 in the Library was completed. Cardinal Librarian Raffaele Farina had inaugurated the work with an article in the *Osservatore Romano* dated June 13, 2007, *Important construction for the buildings of the Vatican Apostolic Library*; “The quantity and the urgent nature of the building and technical operations connected to the consolidation of an entire wing of the sixteenth-century building that houses the Library, has made its closure unavoidable.”

The work, monitored by the Librarian and the new prefect, Msgr. Cesare Pasini (whose appointment was announced in June of 2007), involved the entire Library.

The remodeling began from the entrance, which was entirely redone to create a direct path from the entrance to the elevator under the monumental staircase for a greater convenience of the readers. In the western wing of the Cortile del Belvedere, the rooms which accommodate the periodicals were completely redone.

Great effort was dedicated to consolidate the four floors of space for the Conservation workshop, the Photographic laboratory and archive, which were completely renovated and equipped with air conditioning.

During the construction, the Conservation workshop was

housed in the Reading room, while the stacks for manuscripts under the “Cortile della Biblioteca” were also rebuilt with operations that made it necessary to empty the allotted spaces completely; at the same time construction of a storage room for the conservation of papyrus collections was done.

The Manuscripts room also underwent changes to allow the construction of the “Tower of manuscripts,” near the staircase of Bramante, to build an elevator connecting the manuscript stacks directly to the study room and the Laboratories. This allowed for the manuscripts to be moved from the storage room to other rooms in a more linear and protected way.

The design of the new building, made with Roman brick and finished in travertine, was crafted by engineer Gennaro Guala of Italcementi, and carried out by the Italcementi Cav. Lav. Carlo Pesenti Foundation.

Ten years after the construction of the beautiful and functional structure, and fully conscious of the benefits granted by this architectural work, we are even more grateful to those who built it. Works of great importance were carried out in almost every area of the Library over that particular three-year period in institutional life, but the “Manuscript Tower” is the symbol of the entire renovation project of the venerable Sistine Library.



The Library visits the exhibition of tapestries in the Sistine Chapel

On Wednesday February 19, the employees of the Library accompanied by Barbara Jatta, director of the Vatican Museums, were able to visit the exhibition *Acts of the Apostles in the Sistine Chapel*, open from February 17 to 23.

As part of the celebrations for the fifth centenary of the death of Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520), one of the greatest exponents of the last period of the Renaissance, the Vatican Museums have exhibited the tapestries, preserved in the Vatican collections, in the location for which they were commissioned by Pope Leo X Medici (1513-1521).

Raphael's first stay in Rome dates back to 1509, when he undertook the decoration of the *Stanza della Segnatura* ("Room of the Signatura") and *Stanza di Eliodoro* ("Room of Heliodorus") according to the wish of Julius II. At the time of Leo X, Pope Julius' successor, the artist from Urbino became architect of the Fabric of Saint Peter after the death of Bramante (1514). The pontiff also wanted to entrust him with a cycle of works that crowned the religious message of the Sistine Chapel, one of the most significant places in Christianity. The chapel had already been decorated during the pontificate of Sixtus IV (1471-1486), from whom it takes its name. Pope Sixtus had entrusted the frescoes on the walls to the greatest artists of his time, and Julius II (1503-1513) had then enriched it with the ceiling painted by Michelangelo.



Leo X conceived the idea of a series of tapestries to adorn the lower area of the walls painted with fake curtains, narrating the stories of Saints Peter and Paul from the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Gospels*. Raphael made the drawings and preparatory sketches with the help of his students in 1515 (seven of them are now kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London).

These were sent to Brussels to the workshop of Pieter van Aelst, in order to make them into tapestries with precious threads.



Miraculous catch of fish

The first seven arrived to the Vatican in 1519 and were exhibited in the Sistine Chapel during the Mass of December 26, to the admiration of all those present. Three other tapestries arrived by 1521: *St. Paul in prison*, *The Death of Ananias*, and *St. Paul in Athens*.

All in all, it was a wonderful opportunity for the Library, and was enthusiastically enjoyed by all. Making the trip from the Library to the Chapel also allowed us to pass through the galleries once part of the Library, and to observe the constituent collections of the Museums, the Sacred and the Profane Museums, preserved by the Library until 1998.

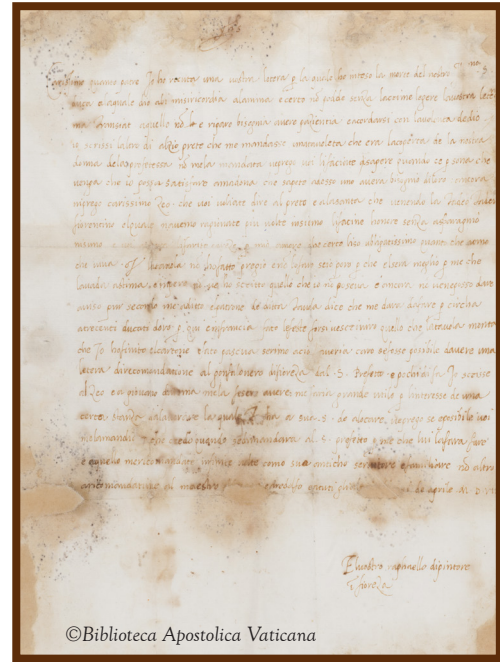


Miraculous catch of fish, detail

Raphael in the Library



Marcantonio Raimondi, Raphael, c. 1518 (Stampe V. 4 (128))
(the artist is resting, maybe in his workshop or in the Vatican rooms)



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Borg. lat. 800

The Vatican Library conserves several precious documents by Raphael Sanzio, "Raphael Urbinas," as he signed his works.

On the occasion of the fifth centenary of the artist's death, we offer our readers an autograph letter from the painter addressed to his maternal uncle, Simone Ciarla, dated April 21, 1508 (Borg. lat. 800); and two drawings, *The Holy Family* and *Madonna with Child* (Vat. lat.13391, f. 2r).

The first was placed in connection with the *Holy Family with a Palm Tree*, preserved in the National Gallery in Edinburgh, painted in 1506; the second can be connected to the preparatory studies of the famous painting kept in the Louvre Museum in Paris, known as *La Belle Jardinière*, made in 1507.



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Vat. lat. 13391, f. 2



RPPOB-16.156



Stampe V. 97(15)



News from the “Fondo Antico” prints



Stampe V. 97(15), detail

In the album *Stampe V. 97* from the *Fondo antico* (“Ancient Collection”) of the Prints Cabinet there is, among other engravings, a print of the Flemish artist Nicolaes de Bruyn (1571-1656) after Jan van Coninxloo (1489- 1546). This precious print depicts St. Hubert (656-727), bishop of Maastricht and first bishop of Liège. Behind the figure appears a bucolic landscape with a horse, dogs, and the iconographic attribute of the saint, a deer.

According to tradition, St. Hubert loved hunting, and it was during a hunting trip that the Lord inspired his vocation to spread the *Gospel* among the people of the Ardennes. While chasing a deer, he suddenly saw the animal that he was pursuing in front of him and looking at him: the animal had a cross between its antlers. This is the episode of Saint Hubert’s life that the print recalls.

Another image from the print can be viewed in the website of the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam. However, comparing the Vatican Library version of 1656 with the Dutch museum’s one of 1614, the spectator is confronted not by one but two edition statements of the same sheet. The great difference is that for the Vatican one, Jan Meyssens (1612-1670), who reworked de Bruyn’s copper plate, not only erased his name and modified the year 1614 with 1656, he also modified the plate in order to add space for the dedication and the inscription in lower margin. The inscription and the emblem refer to the dedicatee of the work, Frederick de Marselaer (1584-1670), who was mayor of Brussels.

In 2017, the Vatican Apostolic Library enthusiastically welcomed an international research project, *Early modern prints from the Low Countries in Italian collections*, promoted by the Belgian Academy in collaboration with the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome (KNIR). The aim of the project is to create a virtual catalog of Flemish Renaissance and Baroque prints from Italian historical collections. It will be a particularly useful tool for researchers interested in the artistic exchange between Italy and the Netherlands that took place from the time of the Renaissance and afterward.

Considering the great potential of such a database to be built (accessible at: <http://stampe-fiamminghe.academibelgica.org/>), the Vatican Library decided to participate in this endeavor along with some illustrious Roman libraries. Together we will make available to fellowship scholars the most valuable part of his graphic collection, called the *Fondo antico*, which constitutes the first systematic collection of engravings, dating to the pontificate of Pius VI Braschi (1775-1799). This collection includes works by artists active between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.

Of the one hundred and sixty-three volumes of the *Fondo antico*, thirty represent the “Flemish School,” even if other volumes of the same collection also contain prints by artists from the Netherlands, as in the case of the *Sacred Miscellanea* and the *Profane Miscellanea*, or the volumes that contain the *Prints of Countries*, *Prints of views*, *Architecture*, etc.

Five of the thirty volumes (shelfmarks *Stampe V. 102-106*), had already been inventoried by Malgorzata Salwa, of the Warsaw University Library, and then cataloged by Ludovica Tiberti in 2016. In 2017 the Belgian art historian Sophie Suykens carried out the work of the inventory; over four months, the scholar was able to complete the inventory relating to five other volumes of the *Fondo antico* (*Stampe V. 107-111*) with 546 prints.

The inventory of Flemish prints in the *Fondo antico* continued in 2019: between September 1 to December 20, Marie Grappasonni cataloged over 700 engravings contained in thirteen volumes (*Stampe V. 95-101*, 112-117). Also, here it was not just a register of prints, but also a precious opportunity to discover origins, links between the prints and the dedicatees and states of the engravings. This information was perhaps not yet brought to light, as in the case described above.

We hope to continue this project and to complete the inventory of the works present in the oldest collection of prints of the Vatican Library as soon as possible, since the other collections, we are sure, could prove to be an important source of research for scholars.

The Stare's Nest by My Window



T. Marangoni, *Il Nido (The Nest)*, 1952



The bees build in the crevices
Of loosening masonry, and there
The mother birds bring grubs and flies.
My wall is loosening; honey-bees,
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

We are closed in, and the key is turned
On our uncertainty; somewhere
A man is killed, or a house burned.
Yet no clear fact to be discerned:
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

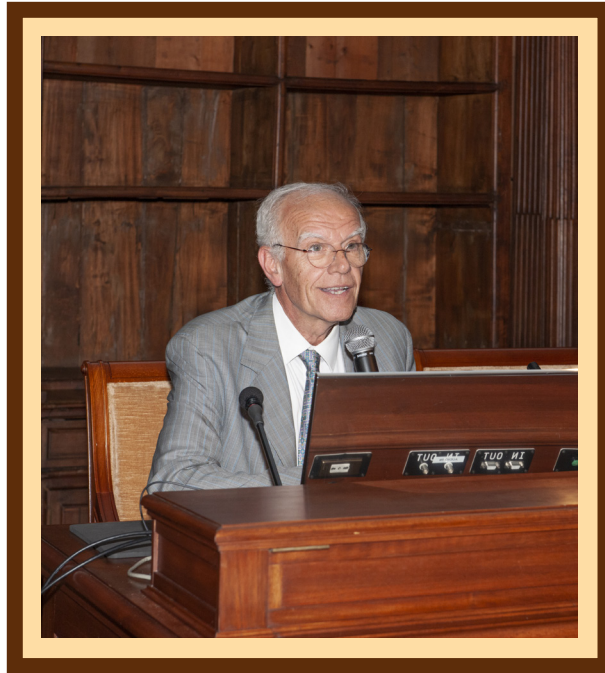
A barricade of stone or of wood;
Some fourteen days of civil war:
Last night they trundled down the road
That dead young soldier in his blood:
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare,
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love; O honey-bees,
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)
From "Meditations in Time of Civil War"
(*The Tower*, 1928)



The Library's Vice Prefect Ambrogio Piazzoni retires



On March 31, vice prefect Ambrogio Maria Piazzoni retired after many years in the service of the Holy See: first at the Publishing House, from October 1, 1977, then at the Library, where he arrived in February 1986, during the prefecture of the Dominican Leonard E. Boyle.

In March 1999, he was appointed vice prefect, the first lay person to receive the position, while Salesian Raffaele Farina was prefect. Among his duties, in addition to being the principal collaborator of the prefect, he has acted as chief of staff and head of publications of the Library, which he has always carried out with particular enthusiasm.

During the long years of service in the Library, Dr. Piazzoni has made use of his best skills, qualities, and his deep devotion to the Institution. In addition, he has helped many people, both professionally and personally.

Due to the situation we are now experiencing, it was not possible to wish farewell to our vice prefect in person. But he sent a gracious message to everyone, postponing a gathering to

greet the Library community in person to more peaceful times, an occasion which we hope will come soon.

Sharing the memory of the years spent in the Library, Dr. Piazzoni wrote to us: "These were beautiful, intense years, in which even the toil of work seemed to often disappear in the passion for what I was doing. My professional life - and much more - took place in the certain awareness that working for the Apostolic See means working for the whole Church. Even in this minor way, within the modest limitations of my person, I was able to make a small contribution to building the Kingdom of God. A work that I therefore also carried out as a vocation and mission, which for the laity is no less important than for religious, because it gives form and meaning to the values of life."

On behalf of the Superiors of the Library, employees and collaborators, we thank you, Ambrogio, and wish you the best in all your endeavors.

Until soon.



Visits to the Library

The German ambassador to the Holy See

On February 21, we had the pleasure of meeting H.E. Michael Koch, German ambassador to the Holy See, who returned to the Vatican Library after a previous visit which took place with his wife Mrs. Ingrid and their daughter Veronika just before Christmas. Mr. and Mrs. Koch came accompanied by Prof. Georg Nolte, a renowned jurist and professor of international law at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin, and his kind wife, Mrs. Elena Nolte-Borovkova.

During the visit the welcome guests were able to make a careful observation of two legal manuscripts, *Pal. lat. 742*, an illuminated manuscript of the fourteenth century which contains the first part of *Corpus iuris civilis*, or *Digestum Vetus*; and the *Borgh. 372*, of the fourteenth century, also an illuminated manuscript, which contains the second part of the *Corpus*, the so-called *Infortiatum*.



American bishops

Two groups of American bishops on their visit to Rome *ad limina Apostolorum* visited the Library on Wednesday, January 29 and Friday, February 14, accompanied by Msgr. Laurence Spiteri, CEO of the Sanctuary of Culture Foundation, which supports many of the Library's projects.

The prelates showed a particular interest in the venerable papal Institution, its history, and its collections.

During the visits they were able to see the facsimile of one of the oldest and most well-known manuscripts of the Library, the so-called *Codex B* (Vat. gr. 1209), which contains the entire text of the *Bible* in Greek, written in an elegant uncial script. This manuscript was made in the first half of the fourth century, on commission by the emperor Constantine.

We greet their Excellencies with particular pleasure, and hope to see them again in Rome and back to the Library most soon.



Bishops from California and Nevada

On February 24th, Dr. Leonid Sevastianov, executive director of the San Gregorio Foundation of the Patriarchate of Moscow, adviser to Metropolitan bishop Hilarion, and president of the Department of External Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow came to visit the Vatican Library, accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Svetlana Kasyan, a famous opera singer to whom the Holy Father conferred the Grand Cross of the Papal Order of San Silvestro last July, and Dr. Luciano Maggi, entrepreneur from Verona.

Before the visit, Mr. and Mrs. Sevastianov and Dr. Maggi met Prefect Msgr. Pasini for a cordial greeting.

The interest and enthusiasm of the guests for our Institution surpass description. With acute attention they listened to the information regarding the over 200 Slavic manuscripts kept in the Vatican preserved in different collections. Of the group of Slavic manuscripts, 54 arrived in 2012 from the Pontifical Oriental Institute. The guests were able to examine one of those manuscripts.

We are very pleased for this visit and for the prospect of cultural collaboration between the parties that emerged during the talks; we hope for a fruitful collaboration in the future.



A small 16th century manuscript made usable again



With the contribution of the Clemente Rebora Cultural Center of Ascoli Piceno, the Library's Conservation workshop was able to restore to use a small paper manuscript, Vat. lat. 5533, hitherto "inaccessible and not photographable." The codex contains the work, *Dell'Acquisto e la conservazione della pace universale e perpetua dell'antichissima e nobilissima città di Ascoli. Trattato diviso in VIII libri, ridotto in compendio* (Of the purchase and the preservation of universal and perpetual peace of the ancient and most noble city of Ascoli. A treatise divided into 8 books, reduced in summary) by Vincenzo Serafini (†1615), dated 1 January 1586 and addressed to Pope Sixtus V.

Most of the papers presented serious damage due to the corrosiveness of the Gallic metal inks, widespread perforations, detachment of fragments, acidity and stains on the entire writing-frame; all the paper pages have been de-acidified and restored. The binding and headbands were in good condition, therefore it was not necessary to dismantle the volume to carry out the interventions. The paper pages were then glossed with a very light veil of Japanese paper which allows for a good legibility of the text.

Immediately after the conservation work, the Photographic laboratory provided for the digitization of the text, now published in the DVL digital library so as to make it usable not only in the Library, but also from afar. We are grateful to the Clemente Rebora Center and we send our best wishes for your future initiatives.

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S. Bartolini, *Gigli del campo*
(Lilies of the field)

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