



«Avvisi» dalla Vaticana



The Library as a pharmacy of the soul

It is said that the pharaohs of Ancient Egypt had the tradition of creating libraries in the most remote cities and that at the entrance was written: "Pharmacy of the soul." This is because a word, as we all know, is not just a word. The centurion in the Gospel had understood this quite well when he said to Jesus: "Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed" (Mt 8,8). The word is a sedimentation of vital experience, the evocation of memory, the transmission and sign of knowledge, a bridge between the present and the future. The word distinguishes us from all other creatures, because we are born with the ability to speak, we live through the word, we know and make ourselves known, thanks to the word.

Manuscripts, incunabula, and printed volumes are precious materials because they are repositories of words within themselves, those words that are indispensable for writing history, for illuminating thought, for deciphering the visible and the invisible, for drawing us nearer to question and meaning. If, as Franz Kafka wrote, "a book can be the right ax for the frozen sea that is within us," it is because there are words that hold this capacity and this power. The mission of a library, after all, is to preserve words and ensure that they remain alive and accessible; that is, that they can still allow human beings to achieve more fully the adventure of their existence. For this reason, a librarian is not just a technician who knows how to catalog books in a certain order, who knows how to distribute them in space, and who does everything to ensure their integrity and preservation. The true librarian is at the service of the word, of love for the word and its delivery. A great contemporary writer, who is at the same time a great reader, the Turk Orhan Pamuk, wrote: "I have learned to use books as medicine ... I need literature as a drug."

Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça

Soon the opening of the Kerkorian Hall



On November 5th, on the first floor of the Sistine Palace, the new Exhibition Hall of the Library will open.

The hall, called Kerkorian after the name of Kirk Kerkorian, American entrepreneur and philanthropist, was realized thanks to the generosity of Anthony Mandekic, Eric Esrailian e Lindy Schumacher, through the Sanctuary of Culture Foundation.

The exhibition, whose title is *Tutti. Umanità in cammino*, is inspired by the recent papal encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. It will present works by the artist Pietro Ruffo, some of which have been specially created for the occasion. They illustrate the theme of travel and migration, underlining the difficulties and the beauty of the encounter between people of different origins, who bring along the richness of their own culture and experience.

The exhibition will feature some valuable manuscripts and geographical maps preserved in the Library, which will be displayed within an itinerary that will also include other areas close to the exhibition hall. The preparation of the exhibition was done thanks to the support of the foundation UNIAPAC (International Christian

Union of Business Executives), a non-profit ecumenical organization inspired by social doctrine, which aims to promote an economy in service of the human person and the common good.

Representatives of UNIAPAC, Bruno Bobone, President, Rodrigo Whitelaw, Secretary General, and Fr. Martin Maier, SJ, the spiritual guide of the foundation, came to the Library last June to meet the Cardinal Librarian, H.E. Card. Tolentino de Mendonça, and the Prefect, Msgr. Cesare Pasini. During the meeting, the project of the exhibition in progress was presented to the guests, which aroused great interest, and the foundation decided to support it.

After the meeting, the guests visited the historic rooms of the Vatican Library, taking particular interest in its institutional mission.

We express our deep gratitude to our benefactors, whom we will have the pleasure of seeing again on the occasion of the exhibition opening.

In the next issue of OWL we will offer an introduction to the exhibition and details about the inauguration.



Fr. Martin Maier, Bruno Bobone, H.E. Card. Tolentino de Mendonça, Rodrigo Whitelaw and Msgr. Cesare Pasini

The 2022 agenda



The theme of the *Tutti. Umanità in cammino* exhibition has also inspired next year's agenda, which will showcase images and material for the first time.

Pietro Ruffo participated in the publication with exceptional enthusiasm and attention; the editorial project owes much to him and to his creative artistry. The paper used for the daily planner is graph paper, a favorite material of the artist. The only color we find and perceive from the pages is blue, a color considered sacred by some cultures. It is a color of great depth in which one can lose oneself indefinitely, and in nature it is present only with a kind of transparency. "The blue dematerializes everything that it touches. It represents the way of the infinite where the real blends with the imaginary. The

depth of the blue has a solemn, supernatural gravity."

It is the color of the abyss and the celestial vault, of the desperation and hope that accompany the human being on the journey among his failures and new possibilities, along with loneliness and life-changing encounters.

A completely new publication for the Library, simple, but elegant, where the contemporaneity of the works hosted and the quotations from the papal encyclical offer reflections to accompany the days to come, giving us new insights.

We hope that our daily planner will find the favor of those who want to use it in next year's journey, to record commitments, but also to reflect, and as the pages and days go by, to find moments of poignant and evocative beauty.



"In today's world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings" - "Fratelli tutti", § 22

Super hanc petram, architectonic medals in a virtual exhibition



Md. Pont. Iulius II. 6_D-R



Md. Pont. Paulus V. 46_D-R

Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam (Mt 16:18) inspired the title of the virtual exhibition set up by the Medagliere of the Apostolic Library, *Super Hanc Petram. The architectonic medals of the Vatican Basilica and the homage of pilgrims to St. Peter*, available on the institutional website from July 23rd: <https://spotlight.vatlib.it/en/testmed>. It forms part of the thematic pathways on the web proposed by the Vatican Library in IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework), an interoperability platform that has been adopted by the most important digital libraries to offer millions of digitized images on their own websites.

St. Peter's Basilica was built upon the pre-existing Constantinian basilica, which dates back to the 4th century. On April 18, 1506, Julius II laid the first stone of the building, which was completed in 1626, during the pontificate of Urban VIII (who consecrated it on November 18). In the subsequent centuries, further construction and embellishments followed in the interior of the basilica, a magnificent landmark of Christianity. From the beginning of the construction, many medals were coined to mark the most significant moments of the process, underlining the basilica's importance and artistic value.

Pilgrims who traveled to Rome from different European countries paid homage to the Prince of the Apostles by leaving a coin at the foot of one of the various altars that graced the original tomb of the saint throughout the centuries. Every evening the coins left by the pilgrims were collected by the staff in charge. At times, some of them ended up and in the cracks in the floor and stayed there.

Some fell from the cracks of the altars to the floor below, often near the place where the apostle is believed to have been buried. Even distinguished figures who visited the tomb left a coin as evidence of the visit. So too Charlemagne, who left a gold coin on one of his trips to Rome there, the only one of the group that has come down to us. A large number of these coins were discovered during the excavations of the years 1939-1949 promoted by Pius XII and undertaken to identify the exact burial place of the saint. The works corroborated the notion that the basilica was actually built on the tomb of the first bishop of Rome.

In the online exhibition, an image gallery presents a series of medals that symbolize the most significant phases of the construction of the magnificent basilica, as well as the moments of works carried out subsequently. On the obverse they present the portrait of the pope of the period, from Julius II (1503-1513) to Pius XII (1939-1958), and on the reverse the architecture of the basilica; for this reason the medals are defined "architectonic."

Six coins left by pilgrims in homage to the saint and found during the excavations have also been added to the online exhibition. They are part of the *Tomba di san Pietro* collection of the Vatican Medagliere.

In total, there are 28 pieces of great value, with descriptions, which tell a centuries-old history of construction of the largest and most important church in the world. Enjoy your visit!



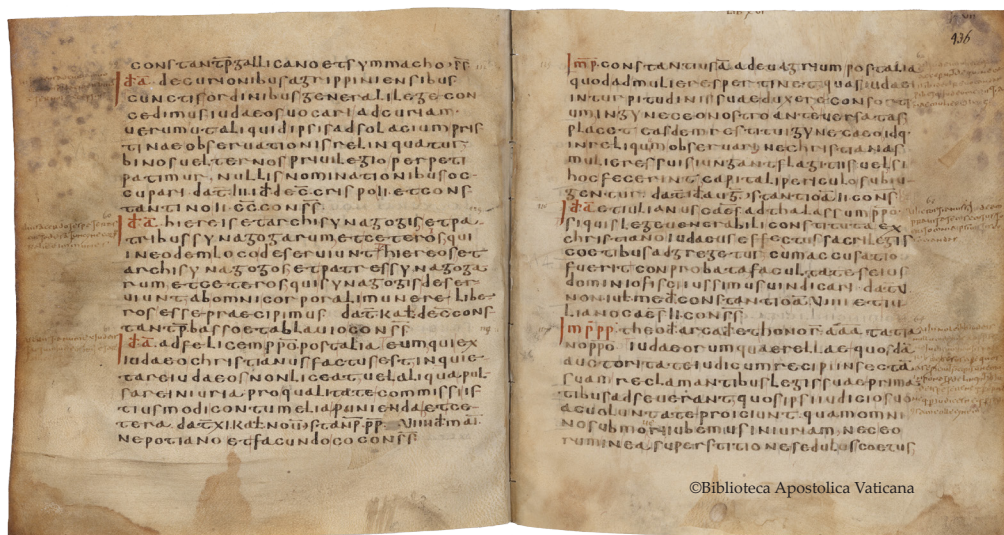
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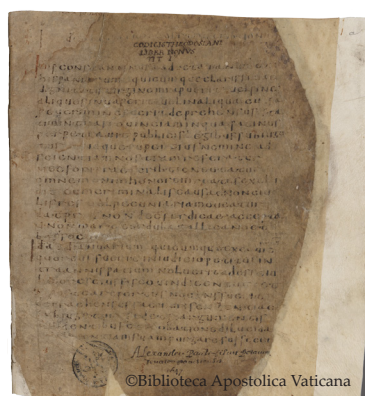
An ancient Reginense codex in an exhibition in Cologne



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From September 15th and continuing for one month, the exhibition *1700 Jahre jüdischen Lebens in Deutschland* hosted a very important document from the codex *Reg. lat. 886*, which dates back to the 6th century, and is one of the oldest testimonies that contains the official collection of the constitutions issued by Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) and entered into practice in 439, called the *Codex Theodosianus*, preserved in the *Reginense* collection of the Vatican Library.

In this exceptional case, the Library loaned the document that handed down Constantine's decree of 321, for the exhibition arranged at the Kunstmuseum Kolumba of Cologne with the collaboration of the Kölner jüdische Museum MiQua, on the occasion of the celebration of a jubilee which is particularly significant in the history of the whole country.



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On December 11th, 321, Emperor Constantine issued a decree regarding the rights of the Jewish communities of the Empire, legalizing the participation of the *cives* of the Jewish faith in the local administrative life, and their eligibility in the municipal councils.

The manuscript represents a fundamental witness to the reconstruction of the presence and role of the Jewish people in the city of Cologne in that period. Particular circumstances consented that the document could temporarily leave the Vatican to be observed closely in the museum of ancient *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*.

The Vatican Library participated in the initiative to foster its contribution of high historical and cultural value, particularly for inter-religious dialogue.

Discovered in the 16th century by Jean du Tillet (d. 1570), the manuscript, now *Reg. lat. 886*, was used in his edition of the *Codex Theodosianus*, Paris: Apud Carolam Guillard sub Sole Aureo, & Guilelmum Desboys sub Cruce Alba, 1550.

The manuscript was afterwards purchased by Christina, Queen of Sweden, for her own library; we lost traces of it after the arrival in Rome of the sovereign and of the *bibliotheca reginae*, which had followed the Queen and her fate. It was "discovered" by Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831) in 1817 within the *Reginense* collection, in the Vatican Library, where it arrived by sale in 1690, soon after Christina's death. The manuscript is now available online:

https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.886

The history of the Vatican Library is full of the great figures who have worked there. Generations of scholars, clergy and laity, have left deep traces in publications and documents. It is not always evident, although it may be intuitive, that the prestige, solidity and strength of an institution such as the one that hosts us are also due to the work that all the employees carry out there. Many of such workers remain completely unknown and almost invisible, people who participate in the operations and activity of the Institute by virtue of their work.

Considering the type of people who work silently, we wish to remember a model employee of some time ago, known to almost none of the current employees, and one who has been an example for several generations of colleagues, Carlo Taddeo Matt, who spent most of his professional life in the Secretariat of the Prefecture.

He was born in Rome on January 6, 1933 of German parents who had moved to Italy for work, and from the age of about twenty he was employed at the Casa Pallotti, on via dei Pettinari.

On January 1, 1969, he joined the Vatican Library at 36 as custodian assigned to the Secretariat after being dispensed from the general rules regarding age limits. The Library's Treasurer, Franz Werlen (1916-2003), had recommended Mr. Matt to the Secretary of the Library, Nello Vian (1907-2000), who was looking for a German-speaking assistant. Werlen, from Switzerland, took care of the Pallottine library in his spare time and had gotten to know and appreciate Mr. Matt at the headquarters of the Congregation.

As results from the documents in the archive, "Being a custodian to be assigned to the Secretariat service, to receive and accompany scholars (most of them foreigners), provide admission forms, give directions for access to the study rooms and field requests for the works to be consulted, always in different languages, His Eminence



Carlo T. Matt and Fr. Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., prefect (1984-1997)

[Card. Eugène Tisserant, 1957-1971] had to choose a person with a good knowledge of the essential languages along with a courteous demeanor and a distinguished presence."

He worked in the Secretariat of the Library in charge of protocol in the capacity of "custodian" until 1977, when he became Secretary of the Prefecture. Even without a degree in library science, Mr. Matt reasoned like a perfect librarian, always aware of the importance of rendering good service.

In January of 1980 he received a promotion at the request of the then Prefect (1971-1984), the Salesian Alfons Maria Stickler.

A father of three children, Ida, Giorgio and Luigi, he had lost his wife, Maria Teresa, in 1981, when she was only 45 years old. Appreciated and highly esteemed by superiors and colleagues, he was a model of dedication and efficiency. Everyone in the Library called him simply Mr. Matt, not "Carlo", not "Taddeo", not "Matt", but Mr. Matt. He harbored a discreet good-naturedness, a shy smile and firmness accompanied by a gentle manner.

In 1998, when he was about to retire, the new Prefect (1997-2007), the Salesian Raffaele Farina, asked him to continue his services for some time. He remained until 1999.

He used to come back to the Library from time to time to greet colleagues and friends, or for holidays, and he continued to do so for a few years. He passed away on June 4, 2008.

The memory of such humble workers shows that the Institution's greatness is also due to such people who strengthen it by their efforts, both in the present and in the future, because "an institution like the Vatican Library can live only through a pact between generations that extends throughout time."

To Mr. Matt, who faithfully served the papal library by his discreet services in its direction, we offer our affectionate acknowledgment.



Eight centuries after the death of St. Dominic

In the year that commemorates the eighth centenary of the death of St. Dominic of Guzmán, the Vatican Library presents images from a small codex, *Ross. 3*, which illustrates the *modi orandi* of the Spanish saint, placed by Dante in the second circle of the wise spirits, in the twelfth canto of *Paradise* (70-72): "He was called Dominic, and I speak of him / as that laborer chosen by Christ / to help him keep his garden."

Born in Caleruega (Castile and León) on June 24, 1170, in 1206 Dominic founded the Order which took his name. Pope Onofrio III approved the Order in 1216, and it quickly spread to many countries. After the approval of the Order, the saint settled in Rome and then in Bologna, where he died on August 6, 1221 at the age of fifty-one.

His rule of active life, inspired by St. Augustine, is characterized by itinerant preaching, a series of monastic observances, and rigorous study.



The Order combined the occupations of the active, doctrinal and missionary life with a canonical and monastic life.

Prayer, which takes place before the Crucifix and is expressed with bodily and spiritual elements that are mutually related to each other, favors recollection, has nine different ways of expression, according to St. Dominic. The first seven follow an ascending line, like the steps of a journey towards communion with God; they can be expressed in three forms: standing, kneeling and lying on the ground.

The saint prays standing and bowed down to express humility; lying on the ground face down to ask forgiveness for his sins; on his knees to do penance by participating in the sufferings of the Lord; standing with hands and arms opened wide like a cross; with his arms outstretched, staring at the Crucifix; with his hands and gaze towards the sky as to receive something from Heaven.

The last two *modi orandi* are different: the eighth way of prayer is a personal meditation, a more intimate expression. After the liturgy of the Hours and the Mass, the saint prolonged his conversation with God by recollecting himself in silence and listening, while he read a book or fixed his eyes on the Crucifix.

The ninth way of prayer is that which is said during the journeys from one convent to another, when he and his companions recited Lauds, the Minor hours, Vespers, while contemplating the wonders of creation that they found along the journey. Praise and thanks for the many gifts received made the journey itself a prayer.

The text of the *De modo orandi* was probably written in Catalonia by an anonymous Dominican friar from Bologna, between 1280 and 1288.

Eight miniature plates and a full-page miniature illustrate the text and each paragraph opens with a pen flourished initial. A small image, a butterfly on the shell of a snail, concludes the illustrative apparatus, the former being a symbol of rebirth of the soul freed from its

carnal trappings; the second, a symbol of movement within the permanence of being through the fluctuations of change.

On the occasion of the jubilee year that commemorates the death of the *praedicator gratiae*, the Holy Father addressed a letter to the *Magister Ordinis Fra'* Gerard Francisco Timoner, O.P. stating that: "Dominic responded to the urgent need of his time not only with a renewed and intense preaching of the Gospel, but also with another element that was equally important, with a credible witness of his invitations to holiness in the living communion of the Church. In the spirit of every authentic reform, he tried to return to the poverty and simplicity of the early Christian community, gathered around the apostles and faithful to their teaching (cf. Acts 2:42). At the same time, his zeal for the salvation of souls led him to establish a body of committed preachers, whose love for the sacred page and integrity of life could enlighten minds and warm hearts with the life-giving truth of the divine word."

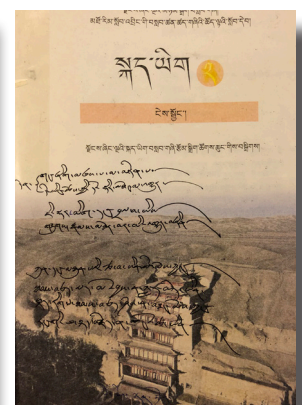
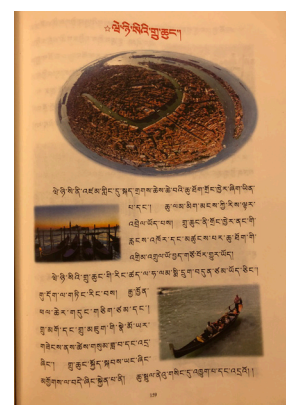
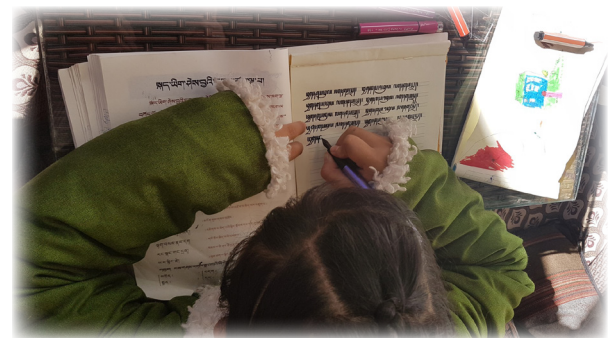


Books from a Tibetan child

Tenzin Chuzum, Mimi (nickname which means younger sister), a 13-year-old Tibetan child living in Lhasa, who lost her father, has heard that the Pope's Library keeps books belonging to the cultures of the world for future generations.

The child wanted to send some of her school books with the help of her older sister, Ishi Ladhun, who would like to be an astronomer when she grows up.

A heartfelt thanks to Mimi and Ishi Ladhun for the gift and for the affection. We encourage them to devote themselves to study with abundant fruit, as they have done so far, and hoping that one day they may come to study the Library's Tibetan manuscripts and much more.





The three Florentine crowns in a Vatican codex

We continue to "Travel with Dante" in the year that commemorates the seventh centenary of the death of the poet, who with his journey beyond earthly boundaries has made an educational journey towards the knowledge of the supreme truth.

In this issue we present a particularly important codex of the *Divine Comedy*, which represents the bond between the major exponents of early Italian literature, the three crowns of our fourteenth-century poetry.

Vat. lat. 3199 is the codex that some consider to have been commissioned by Giovanni Boccaccio, the first great publisher and interpreter of the work, as a gift to be presented to Francesco Petrarca. Written in Florence in the second quarter of the 14th century, by the so-called "Vat copist", the text covers 78 sheets with two columns per page. On f. 1v there is an apostille attributed to the hand of Petrarch. A cartouche with a note in French describing the manuscript is pasted on one of the fly leaves. Dante's text is preceded by a poem in 40 hexameters, *Ytalie iam certus honos*, composed by Boccaccio. On f. 80r, there is a sheet of paper glued onto the parchment with watercolor pen portraits of Dante and Petrarch, most likely made in the sixteenth century. On the verso of the sheet are later Latin epitaphs by the hand of Pietro Bembo: *Iura monarchie*, by Bernardo di Canaccio Scannabecchi; *Frigida Francisci*, Petrarch's epitaph; *Cura labor meritor*, Seneca's epitaph;

Exigua tumuli Dantes, by Bernardo Bembo. The codex would have passed from Petrarch to Bernardo Bembo and then to his son Pietro. In 1582 Fulvio Orsini bought the manuscript from Torquato Bembo, and upon the death of Orsini the codex came to the Library according to the terms of his last testament.

The note in French shows that the codex was "exiled" in France following the Napoleonic requisitions. According to the Treaty of Tolentino (February 19, 1797), which put into effect what was established in the armistice of Bologna (June 23, 1796), the pontiff had to deliver to France 100 paintings, statues and vases, and 500 manuscripts chosen by the French commissioners. The convoy with nine crates containing the Vatican manuscripts, including ours, left for Paris on July 13, 1797 and returned to Rome leaving at the end of 1815.

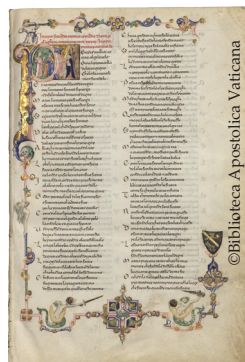
The codex bears the red stamp of the Bibliothèque Nationale, which was affixed to many Vatican manuscripts when they arrived to the French library.

The trauma caused by French stamps on the codices that returned to the Vatican Library gave rise to the stamping that has since been applied to the Vatican manuscripts of the Library, though it was never in use before.

Vat. lat. 3199 is one of the manuscripts included in the virtual exhibition dedicated to Dante by the Library:

<https://www.vaticanlibrary.va/en/travel-with-dante.html>

We invite you to visit it to learn more and make discoveries that delight the eyes and the heart.



The poetry corner



Sea-Fever

*I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.*

*I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.*

*I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.*

John Masefield (1878-1967)



Three Israeli ambassadors



On July 7, the Vatican Library hosted three important diplomatic representatives of Israel, H.E. Oren David, ambassador to the Holy See since 2016, H.E. Dror Eydar, ambassador to Italy since 2019, and H.E. the Israeli ambassador to the UN agencies in Rome, Mrs. Yael Rubinstein, accompanied by her husband, Mr. Dan Sherman.

Delio Proverbio, *scriptor orientalis* of the Library, showed the guests particularly significant documents linked to Jewish culture and other documents preserved in the Library: *Vat. ebr.* 357; (*Kitāb al' -Adwiya al-Mufrada* and

the *Koran*, both written in Arabic with Hebrew characters); *Vat. ebr.* 273 (*Sefer ha - Zikkuk*, an index of forbidden books compiled by Domenico Gerosolimitano, Samuel Vivas, c. 1552-c. 1691); and two printed books: *Stamp. Ross.* 3787-3788 (*Maḥzor shalem mi-kol ha-shanah*, Jewish liturgy) and *Stamp. Ross.* 5293 (*Perush ha-Torah*, commentaries on the *Pentateuch*). Our welcome guests also enjoyed viewing documents from the collection that belonged to Cesare Poma (1862-1932, added in 1932) that contain, among other things, a series of newspapers in 120 different languages.



The British Minister of Culture

The British Minister of Culture and Digital, Hon. Caroline Dinenage, accompanied by the Deputy Head of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires of the British Embassy to the Holy See, Mrs. Joanna Cappa-Gunduz, together with her successor, Mrs. Anabel Inge, visited the Library on the morning of July 29th.

The visit was led by the Vice-Prefect of the Library, Timothy Janz, who gave a tour of the most important places of our Institution to the welcome guests.



The request for the visit reached the Library through the courtesy of Her Majesty's former Ambassador to the Holy See, H.E. Sally Axworthy, whom we have had the pleasure of knowing and appreciating on several occasions over the years, even outside the Library. We would like to extend our warm greetings to Mrs. Axworthy who has completed her diplomatic mission to the Holy See, and express our gratitude to her for the spirit of collaboration that characterized her mission, with the hope of seeing her again soon at the Library.



Monsieur Hélié de Cornois

On September 16, Monsieur Hélié de Cornois visited the Library in the company of H.E. Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça, our Librarian, to get to know the venerable papal institution and to admire some of the works which it preserves.

Hélié de Cornois is Director of one of the world's leading financial agencies. He advises the major assets of private clients and investors on a range of matters concerning the planning of international and domestic estates. Hélié de Cornois has extensive experience in philanthropy.

The visit continued with a trip to the Restoration and Photographic Laboratories to observe what is being done for the conservation of the Vatican Library's vast heritage of books.

After the visit, a meeting took place in the Sala Barberini, in the presence of the Prefect and the Vice Prefect, during which the main projects of the Pope's Library were presented to the welcome guest.





Borg. arm. 75, f. 13r (detail)

The Vatican Library is particularly pleased to announce that 120 Armenian manuscripts preserved in its deposits have recently been digitized, thanks to the donations received through the Sanctuary of Culture Foundation, an organization that is always so responsive and active in supporting the projects of our Institution.

The presence of Armenian manuscripts in the Library began long ago. Already in an inventory from 1686, the *Vaticani armeni* manuscripts - belonging to the "open" collection of the Armenian manuscripts - were, in total, 9. Some more manuscripts arrived before 19th century and a remarkable increase of items was registered during the 20th century. In 1902 the big collection of the Borgia Museum came to the Library from the Propaganda Fide Congregation, in which there were also 88 Armenian manuscripts. Three of them had belonged to Cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731-1804), *Borg. arm.* 54, 60 and 61.

With the arrival of more collections in the first half of the 20th century, such as the Barberini (1902), and the Chigi (1923) family libraries, as well as the Archive of the Chapter of St. Peter (1940), a few Armenian manuscripts came into the Library, still preserved in their "historical" collections, together with manuscripts in other languages.

In parallel, the open *Vaticani armeni* collection registered other acquisitions by sale (mainly during the Twenties) and donations, gradually reaching to 47 manuscripts.

Some other isolated Armenian manuscripts were recently identified in other collections of the Library (*Autografi Paolo VI*, *Sire*, *Pagès*, *Vaticano siriano*). The Armenian manuscripts are now almost 150: mainly liturgical or theological works, Bibles, Psalters, as well as grammatical texts and dictionaries and philosophical texts. Some of the Armenian manuscripts are richly illuminated and of incomparable beauty. Most of them can now be consulted on the website of the digital library: <https://digi.vatlib.it>

The *Grande pane* by Pierantonio Verga



Since July 15, the Library has kept the work by Pierantonio Verga (1947-2015), *Grande pane* (mixed technique on paper, 50x63 cm), created in 2007. Verga's son, Amos, offered the work as a gift to the Institution, which extends its gratitude.

The artist was born in Milan in 1947, and in Lombardy he spent his life carrying out a very personal research to express his lyrical universe; at the beginning, his art was more narrative, and then it gradually became more and more symbolic, evocative and even ritual, observing and turning back far into time, towards what is essential for man.

There is a work of progressive subtraction in the artistic world of Verga; over the years, he highlights essential concepts, expressed with the delicacy of pure lines, a light stroke, and strong colors. For example, his houses

become almost dreamlike images, often placed next to a tree drawn with few lines and vibrant colors that recall the whole world of nature. This profoundly symbolic essentiality is expressed by this work. As his son Amos has undelined: "A silent image: bread. There is some reminiscence of a Morandian approach but here, Verga goes beyond matter. He uses still life as an expression of a Leopardian infinity where 'supernatural silences' live.

The artist's wish to go beyond the descriptive aspect to convey a feeling of a 'very deep stillness' contextualizes the subject as of a starry treasure chest. The simplified use of forms combined with numerous energetic brushstrokes make the work a spiritual testament. Verga therefore offers a piece of bread as a gift to capture a personal spirituality. And the bread, a symbol of sharing, becomes for the artist a reason for thinking, for beauty, for life."





Fray Luis de León at the Vatican Library

The popular expression is known to many: *Dicebamus hesternam die* (we were saying yesterday), to resume a speech interrupted some time before, usually in an abrupt way, by those who go back to express opinions freely, after having been obliged to interrupt it, resuming the speech as if the interruption had not occurred.

The expression is attributed to the Spanish friar Luis de León (1527-1591), an Augustinian and professor of theology at the University of Salamanca. In a hostile environment, together with his students he dedicated himself to republishing the texts of the Bible in the original Hebrew. In 1571 the Inquisition denounced him for having translated the *Song of Songs* into Spanish, commenting on it, and putting the authority of the *Vulgate* in doubt. In both cases he was declared completely innocent, but in the meantime he had to undergo an imprisonment of four years, at the end of which he resumed his teaching activity. When he resumed his lessons, he seems to have pronounced the well-known phrase.

Besides the translations of oriental and classical languages, friar de León is remembered for his poetic activity, to which he was drawn by his familiarity with ancient writings. He was also known for his commentaries on biblical texts and theological works.



Some theological writings of the Augustinian friar are preserved in a miscellaneous manuscript that is yet to be digitized, which contains commentary by different authors on the work of St. Thomas, *Ott. lat. 287*. The codex is part of the *Ottoboni* collection, purchased by Benedict XIV in 1748 from the family. Like others in the collection, this manuscript comes from the Altemps library and had been donated to Pietro Ottoboni senior (1610-1691), elected Pope Alexander VIII in 1689, by Duke Pietro Altemps (+1691) in 1590. The manuscript had belonged to Giovanni Angelo Altemps (1586-1620), a scholar and a bibliophile.





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- Michael I. Allen
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- Franco Bevilacqua
- H.E. Åke Bonnier and Kristina Gustafsson Bonnier
- Simona Giampaoli and family
- Frank J. Hanna
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