

*Online Window into the Library*



*«Avvisi» dalla Vaticana*



*Urbino Bible, Urb. lat. 1, f. 7r.*

*In the background a fragment from the Hanna Papyrus 1 (Mater Verbi), containing the Gospels by Luke and John*

*The Cultural Role of the Bible*

*That the Vatican Apostolic Library is to a great extent a true «sanctuary» of the Bible is well-known. The Library not only preserves many of the most ancient written witnesses to the biblical text, but its collections also attest to the Bible's enormous cultural influence. In this sense, a lack of knowledge about the Bible is not only a deficiency from a religious perspective but also a form of cultural ignorance. Such negligence signifies a complete loss of understanding about a decisive part of the hermeneutical horizon into which we have been placed historically. After all, the Bible represents a kind of «iconographic atlas», a «font of symbols». It is a receptacle of stories, a cabinet full of famous personages, a theater for the natural and the supernatural, a fascinating laboratory of languages. To understand the Bible in this way means, at different levels, to understand oneself.*

*The Bible disseminates itself in thought, in imagination and in daily life. In an indisputable way, the Bible constitutes a "meta-text", a kind of indispensable key for deciphering reality. From philosophy to political science, from psychoanalysis to literature, from the explicit architecture of cities to the implicit designs of the heart, from so-called sacred art to the forms of expression that fill galleries, museums, and shelves everywhere: the Bible is a voluntary or involuntary partner in global communication. The world constructs itself in inter-textuality. The biblical text participates in the construction of the world and renders it legible.*

*Card. José Tolentino De Mendonça  
Archivist and Librarian of H.R.C.*

## A Visit from the Chief Rabbi of Rome



On the Day for Deepening and Developing Dialogue between Catholics and Jews, which was held at Rome's Jewish Museum, this year the 33rd installment, the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Rome met with the Cardinal Librarian to discuss *"The Human and Spiritual Resources of Judaism and Christianity for the Trial of the Pandemic"*.

The meeting offered a meaningful occasion to share insights about, and engage with, the difficulties endured. Both leaders expressed the desire to propose common ways from their diverse spiritual resources to face with awareness and trust the challenges that these times have placed before us.

This truly fraternal meeting occurs every year on 17 January, the eve of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with the intention of increasing awareness and respect among Christians for Jewish tradition, for promoting an ever deeper dialogue, and, aided by the Scriptures, to pursue the common good in a spirit of fraternity.

At the meeting, the Librarian invited the Rabbi to visit the Vatican Library, which occurred on 31 January. Riccardo Di Segni was accompanied by Costanza Coen, his spouse, Ruth Dureghello, the President of the Jewish Community, and Elio Di Segni, his brother.

During their visit, the distinguished guests had the opportunity to admire some precious documents related to Jewish culture, presented by our Orientalist Delio Proverbio. The manuscript *Vat. pers. 61* (late 15th century), preserves a Judeo-Persian translation of the Pentateuch; each Hebrew verse is followed by a Persian translation. The manuscript *Vat. ebr. 357(2)*, contains a unique Judeo-Moroccan Arabic translation of the Coran, written in an elegant Sephardic cursive script from the beginning of the 15th century, with an interlinear Latin translation made by the Sicilian Jew Flavio Mitridate; on f. 66r appears a marginal gloss by the Humanist Pico della Mirandola.

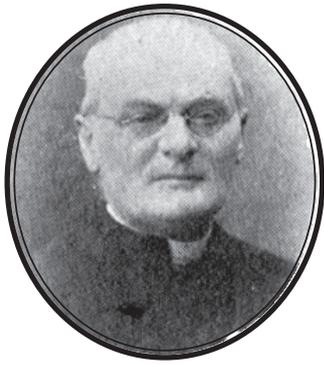
The splendidly illuminated parchment manuscript *Ross. 498* contains a most influential text for the medieval Jewish tradition of the Halakhic, the Mishneh Torah composed by Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1138-1204). The codex, dating from 1451-1475, is written in a semi-cursive Ashkenazi hand and presents five illustrated tables at the beginning of each chapter, which were possibly made in a Lombard workshop. *Vat. ebr. 358* contains some chapters from the first part of the encyclopedia *Kitāb kāmīl al-ṣinā'a al-ṭibbiyya* ("The Complete Art of Medicine"), an Arabic text written in Hebrew letters. The text was composed by 'Alī ibn al-'Abbās al-Majūsī (d. 384/994) in the city of Trapani named in the colophon. Finally, our honored guests were presented *Ross. 555*, richly illuminated, dated 24 November 1435 (Mantua), and composed by Jacob ben Asher (c. 1270 - c. 1340).



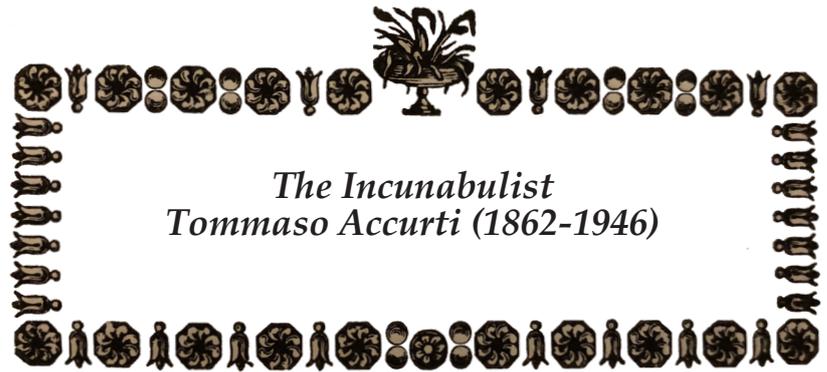
*Ross. 498, f. 13v*



*Ross. 555, ff. 220r-219v*



*T. Accurti*



## *The Incunabulist* *Tommaso Accurti (1862-1946)*

On the afternoon of Sunday 20 January 1946, the “most expert incunabulist” Don Tommaso Accurti died in Rome. He had worked in the Vatican Library since 1928 on the cataloguing of fourteenth-century editions without an actual position. His “unique bibliographic expertise, the result of his deep knowledge and study, made him the absolute master of a field reserved for only a few”.

He was born in Porto San Giorgio (Ascoli Piceno) on 11 November 1862 and was ordained priest in 1885. He taught at the Archepiscopal Seminary of Fermo before his transfer to Rome. There, “[...] his vast knowledge of ancient editions [...], his personal gifts of courtesy and scientific generosity made him well-known and endeared him to the world of bibliophiles, while his fame also spread abroad in the field of ancient bibliography”.

The Vatican Library asked him to join the project to compose new descriptions of the Library’s collections, which was begun in 1927 with the support of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. For the cataloguing of the manuscript collections and the printed books, inventory descriptions were to be written on cards according to specific, scientific, rules and principles. This was undertaken to make the Library’s precious collections more accessible to scholars. The collection of incunabula also needed an easy-to-use and up-to-date repertory. At that time all that was available was a handwritten catalogue in four volumes composed between 1853 and 1868 by the canon Luigi Zappelli (*Vat. lat.* 14615-14618), describing 1,547 incunabula. By 1927, however, the collection had grown considerably.

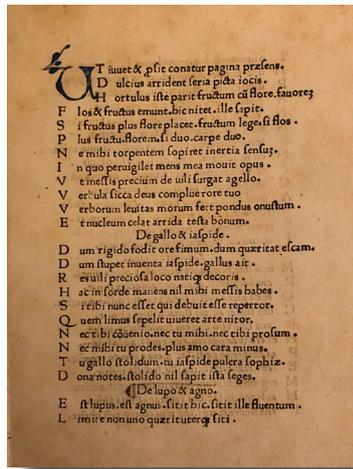
In his work at the Library, Accurti succeeded the Brescian Luigi Gramatica (1865-1935), who, when he had worked at the Ambrosiana Library, had been charged with, among other things, the composition of the *Catalogo alfabetico degli incunaboli* belonging to that ancient Milanese institution, containing descriptions for 1,749 editions.

Gramatica was Prefect of the Ambrosiana beginning in September 1914 after Achille Ratti (later Pope Pio XI, 1922-1939) had been named Prefect of the Vatican Library.

He remained in this position until his resignation in 1924, at which point he moved to Rome. In 1927 the Prefect of the Vaticana (1919-1936), mons. Giovanni Mercati, later its Cardinal Librarian (1936-1957), entrusted Gramatica with the responsibility to “make and publish a catalogue of the Vatican’s incunabula”, a charge he abandoned two years later.

In 1931 the grand project *Indice Generale degli Incunaboli delle biblioteche d’Italia* (IGI) began, after its proposal at the First World Congress on Libraries and Bibliography held in Italy in 1929. Between 1943 and 1981 six volumes were published in this project, taking into consideration 800 libraries and 100,000 copies for 11,000 editions. Accurti labored on the Vatican’s incunabula, which were not included in the Italian project, but the two initiatives advanced in parallel. He was often consulted and generously collaborated with his colleagues, to such an extent that «thanks to the contribution of Accurti, the IGI has taken shape as a complete survey of fourteenth-century printed books possessed by Italian libraries». In the Preface to the first volume of the IGI, Nella Sanvito Vichi referred to Accurti, saying, «with a sense of friendly and disinterested collaboration equal to his unparalleled expertise that all recognize in the matter, he often took pleasure in giving his opinion on some difficult cases».

He was not a prolific author, but among his bibliographic publications three stand out. The *Catalogo degli incunaboli della Biblioteca Guernacci di Volterra* (1929), with descriptions of 268 editions, was made between 1926 and 1927. In a review of this work, Luigi De Gregori (1874-1947), incunabulist and expert in Roman printing, who, among other things, was the director of the Biblioteca Casanatense, wrote: «The method used by Accurti for the layout of this catalogue can serve as a model [...]»; and on another occasion he defined it in this way «an unsurpassable model in its exactitude, in its precision, and in the sobriety of its descriptions; while it frees the articles of useless traditional details, it makes them respond to the most essential items because they are bibliographic».



Aesopus,  
 Fabulae.  
 Mantuae,  
 Thomas Septemcastrensis  
 et Iohannes Vurster, c. 1472,  
 prima opera registrata nel  
 catalogo 1930

Accurti produced two more volumes, *Editiones saeculi XV pleraeque bibliographis ignotae* (1930) and *Aliae editiones saeculi XV pleraeque nondum descriptae* (1936), that added precious descriptions for incunabula which were unknown until then and provided corrections to the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, a monumental work undertaken by the eponymous Commission established in Berlin to catalogue all known incunabula systematically. To produce these two publications, Accurti conducted extensive investigations in the Roman libraries that he had visited from time immemorial and where he was known to be a frequent, although silent and almost shy visitor, as well as libraries in other cities. The first volume contains entries for 176 new editions, 65 of which are from the Vaticana, whereas the second adds 80 new editions, 45 of which come from the Vatican Library.

Accurti's work was thankless, requiring solid knowledge, a vast and profound cultural education to master the subject, and a life spent in the library. After so much effort, laborious research, problems to be solved, checks and comparisons, he composed «short catalog articles, concise as epigraphs, intelligible to beginners, even if unpleasant to the eye on account of the play of acronyms, abbreviations, numbers». Don Accurti did not give up in the face of difficulties. On the contrary, such things seemed to encourage him to intensify his work so that he could resolve the large and small issues which continually arose.

He could not complete the description of the Vatican incunabula, which numbered 6,836 in 1927.

In the following months another 500 were added.

He arranged and produced part of the descriptions according to the methods agreed upon for the project, with the help of Msgr. Stanislas Le Grelle and Mario Bevilacqua, both employees of the Vaticana; “provisional” entries were gradually added in the drawers of the card catalogue for printed books.

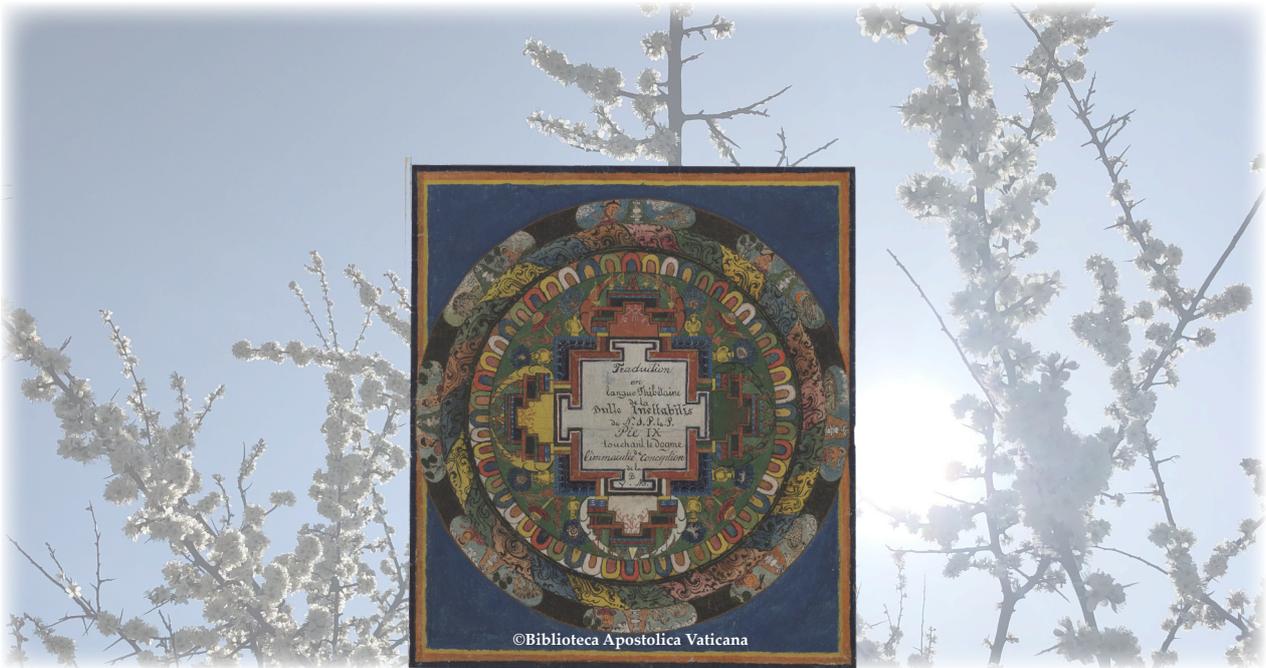
In the opinion of De Gregori, who knew well the priest from the Marche, «Don Accurti, not concerned with making his very modest standard of living even less modest, worked for himself alone, not to produce but to learn more, to immerse himself more and more in the vastness of a study that had become his passion and his second life. [...] Modesty and reluctance on the one hand, and on the other the contentment in his own self-criticism, made it seem inappropriate for those dense cards, for which he had filled notebook upon notebook and from which might appear a near perfect catalogue of all incunabula in Roman libraries, to see the light of day»; a rare example of humility and disinterested labour. Accurti undertook this enormous work knowing it could not be completed and that others would need to continue it. To this end, he did not leave behind theoretical formulations but concrete and exact examples to which to refer.

In 1997 William J. Sheehan, C.S.B. (1937-2018), who had begun work on the project in 1988, completed the printed descriptions for the Vatican's incunabula, published in four volumes. It contains 5,205 descriptions for 7,926 volumes, 66 of which were printed on parchment. Today, descriptions for all of the Vatican's incunabula (ca. 8,600) can be consulted through the Library's online catalogue.



Pius PP. II, 1405-1464,  
 Epistulae familiares.  
 Nuremberge, Antonij Koburger,  
 1481  
 Inc. Chig. II. 1448





Sire. L. 13, f. 1r

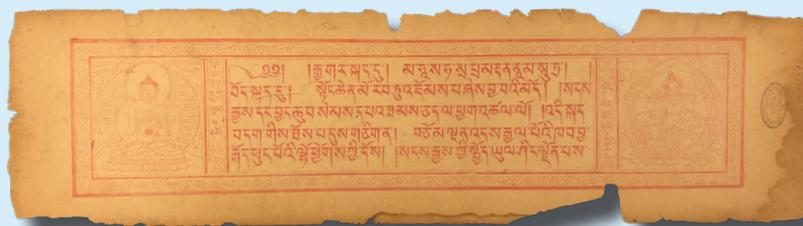
Among the many documents in the Vatican Library that represent the cultures of the world are some precious Tibetan texts, although dissimilar in terms of origin, content and format, from the 18th and 19th centuries. The most important of these is the *sNar thang bka' 'gyur* (R.G. Oriente S.19), one of the editions of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. Paul Pelliot catalogued them in 1922, followed by Takata Tokio in 1995 (*Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits et imprimés chinois de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, 1995). In addition to these canonical texts (R.G. Oriente S.19 e R.G. Oriente VI.276), there is a Tibetan-Mongolian Dictionary (*Vat. estr. or.* 114), a text on exorcism (*Vat. estr. or.* 82), section *cha* of *gSung 'bum* or "Opera Omnia" of Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-nyi-ma (1737-1802) (*Vat. estr. or.* 58, pt. 1-2), a *gter ma* or treasure text by 'Ja' tshon snying po (1585-1656) (*Vat. estr. or.* 115) and an incomplete miscellany of texts concerning history and education called *dri med dngul sgong* (*Vat. estr. or.* 171).

These texts are preserved in both manuscripts and woodcuts, written in either capitals (*dbu can*) or in cursive (*dbu med*), and their format is generally that of Indian *pothi* in loose sheets. Their importance can be judged in many ways: the study of lesser known texts, the history of missionary activity, codicology, and the study of their writing support material (Tibetan paper).

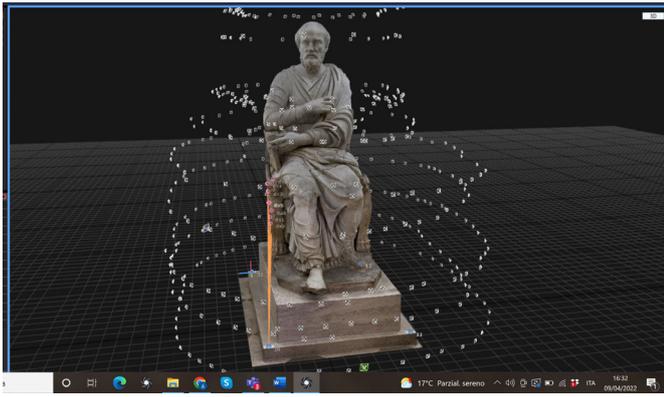
These works have been digitalized recently and published online. Professor Elena De Rossi Filibeck with the collaboration of Nyima Dondhup have made proper catalogue descriptions; these are also available in Tibetan.



R. G. Oriente VI. 276



## The Statue of "Hippolytus"



3D Virtual model of the statue, by the PAU Department of the Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria

The so-called statue of "Hippolytus" has stood at the entrance of the Library since 1959. Pope John XXIII ordered it moved from the Museo del Laterano, where it had been since the pontificate of Pius IX. For half a century, the statue remained at the foot of the stairs in the main entryway. In 2010, a new stairway was constructed, and the statue was moved to a niche to the right as one enters the Library.

The statue has long been associated with Saint Hippolytus. It was discovered near the catacomb of the martyr between the via Nomentana and the via Tiburtina. In addition, inscriptions on the sides of the throne refer to the Computus of Easter and those on the rear contain a list of Christian works, some of which are traditionally attributed to a Saint Hippolytus (although not necessarily the same Hippolytus as the Roman martyr). In a Vatican manuscript (*Vat. lat.* 3965, f. 24v), we learn that "the 'stone', upon which a Greek calendar is inscribed, was brought to the library from the Pope's *loggia*" before 6 April 1551, meaning that at that time it was already in the Vatican. The quotation refers to the statue as a 'stone' because its upper part was damaged. Pirro Ligorio, indefatigable artist and antiquarian, gave the name and identity to this discovery with which it has been associated for centuries. He described and depicted the statue in 1553 (now preserved in the manuscript Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, XIII B 7). He proposed for the first time the hypothesis that the statue represented "Saint Hippolytus", a Roman and a bishop. Then between 1564 and 1565, he arranged for the "restoration" of the "statue of Saint Hippolytus", so that it could be given a privileged place in the great hemicycle of the Theatre of Belvedere.

Margherita Guarducci's studies (1974-1975) mark a turning point in the fortunes of the statue. She drew attention to the heterogeneous nature of the artwork, stating that the entire upper part, including the abdomen and shoulders, was modern, dating from Ligorio's restoration.

From this observation she reconstructed the statue's complex history, making a series of hypotheses that, for the most part, require verification and, it seems, some correction. Guarducci maintained that its lower part was the only surviving piece of "the ancient statue", comprising the throne, the legs, and the lap of the clothed, sitting figure. From her analysis of the drapery covering the figure, she in fact believed that she could prove that the statue had originally been of a woman.

Close examination reveals differences in material and workmanship between the throne and the lower part of the body. It is a "bricolage" of various ancient fragments, more or less reworked. A systematic study of the surfaces and their forms, now in progress, suggests that in particular the legs covered by a drape have undergone a deep reworking, most likely performed by the same hand responsible for the drapery covering the bust. Taking together, they call into question Guarducci's conclusion that the figure seated on the throne is a woman.

The statue's bust and, in particular its head, present an interesting problem. It unites stylistic traits that reflect the sixteenth-century dating of the restoration, as the documentation attests, yet at the same time these traits appear similar to classical physiognomic types, which in some ways recall late antique portraiture. If it is, therefore, an invention of Ligorio, it was without doubt very well done and imitates artistic features common to the first half of the third century, the date for the reconstruction of the figure of "Saint Hippolytus martyr and bishop", who was perhaps the author of theological works, including the famous Easter Computus. For this last item, an accurate re-examination of the epigraphs on the two sides of the throne, defined by Guarducci as "not only coeval, but certainly of the same hand" seems promising. If, as it seems, the typology of the letters is broadly the same for the two inscribed panels, the organization of the text, the relationship of the text to the space and the content seem to reveal notable differences that certainly deserve further study.

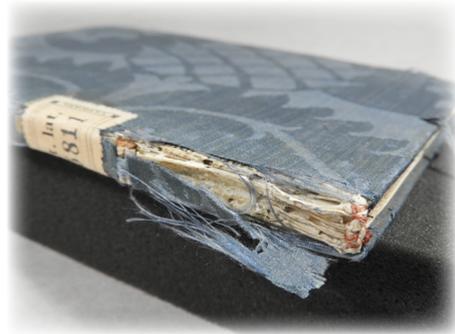
The uncertainties and problems which have emerged from the most recent examinations, make the statue even more intriguing. They have also given rise to the possibility of a new research project, a international and interdisciplinary collaboration, which includes the participation of both the Library and the Vatican Museums. An exciting possibility is provided by 3D modelling technology. A virtual model of the statue, at the highest resolution, will allow for the study of aspects of the statue which until now have been inaccessible. This can open new perspectives from which to understand this enigmatic monument.

## SCF Contributions for Conservation Work

The work to preserve our patrimony never ceases for the Library's Conservation Laboratory. It is the first stop during the process to digitalize the manuscripts which must be examined before and after the reproduction is made. Many manuscripts are not able to be photographed because of their present state of conservation. Consequently, the work of the Conservation Laboratory to safeguard these precious materials is considered a part of the digitalization project.

Among the various supports for the massive digitalization project, embracing every manuscript (and more besides) and including their conservation, the Library can count on the Sanctuary of Culture Foundation. The main mission of the Foundation is to help carry out the most important and necessary projects for this ancient papal institution.

To thank all the members of the Sanctuary of Culture Board, we share with our readers some images of conservation interventions carried out on three manuscripts from among the many which have been restored thanks to the Foundation's contributions.



*Vat. lat. 5811*

*Restoration of the spine in damask silk using Japanese paper dyed with watercolours and glued on silk*



*Vat. sir. 567*

*Compensation for gaps made with Japanese paper dyed with watercolours and starch.*



*Barb. lat. 4*

*Extension of thongs designed to re-anchor the anterior axis of a Renaissance binding.*



## A Japanese Archive in the Vatican Library



Announcements concerning the massive Marega collection, including work completed over two years ago, was delayed because of the pandemic. Only recently, 2 March, was a press conference held in the Sala Barberini to raise awareness of this most important Japanese archive outside of Japan and its associated projects.

This collection, named after the Salesian Mario Marega (1902-1978) and preserved in the Vatican Library, contains more than 14,000 documents, which were at risk of being dispersed. This archive concerns the life of communities in the regions of Ōita and Miyazaki, which proved to be a fertile place for Christianity.

Marega gathered these materials during his forty-year stay in Japan. He wished to recover aspects of local history, in particular the memory of persecution and of martyrs in earlier centuries.



A first group of about ten documents arrived in Italy in June 1938 and were placed first in the Museo Lateranense, then in the Vatican Archive, and finally in the Library in 2020. In 1953, the Substitute of the Secretary of State, Giovanni Battista Montini (1897-1978), the future Pope Paul VI, received word from the Nuncio in Japan, Maximilien von Fürstenberg, of the imminent arrival of a huge collection of archival documents. These documents were deposited in the Vatican Library between June and December of that year with the help of the Italian Ambassador in Tokyo.

In 1965 they were placed in the Library's "Deposit A". It was not until 2011 that they were rediscovered and attempts were made to judge their scope and worth.

To these other documents were later added: some were donated to the Vatican by the Cimatti Museum of the Salesian Seminary of Chofu; about 300 documents, also from Chofu, which had been kept at the Salesian University since 2005, were transferred to the Vatican in 2016; finally, a small group of Japanese books that belonged to Marega was found in the Library of the Vatican Museums, and in 2018 this collection entered the Vatican Library as well. The digitalization of all of the documents (<http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/~marega/>) was included in this project, which has involved the participation of several Japanese institutions: Institutes for Research in the Humanities, the Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo, and the Ōita Prefecture Ancient Sages Historical Archives. A fundamental phase for this project has been the work of conservation, undertaken by the personal of the Library's Laboratory in collaboration *in situ* with Japanese experts who demonstrated the techniques used to restore archival documents in Japan. 4,600 documents have been restored. These come in diverse formats, (the majority are *jō*, paper rolls) with special diplomatic characteristics.



At the end of this fruitful collaboration, which also involved the Italian School of East Asian Studies in Kyoto and the Salesian University of Rome, a conference was held in the Library in order to share what had been learned with other experts on the continent, to improve theoretical conceptions, and for a small group of experts to experiment with the main techniques of restoration on a few original documents specifically chosen for the purpose. The meeting was the first of its kind in Europe. The acts of this conference, *Preservation and conservation of Japanese archival documents. The Marega collection in the Vatican Library*, have been published by the Library in the series *La casa dei libri* of the School of Library Science.

«Working together on documents which witness to a persecution lasting two and a half centuries», Prefect mons. Cesare Pasini stressed, -the prohibition of Christianity in Japan, the *Kinkyō-rei*, beginning in 1612- «it was possible to build a common experience [...], which was expanded and deepened by mutual knowledge and esteem. It is our pleasure to express this positive reality under the name of *cultural diplomacy*».

## Drawings, Silver and Silversmiths from the Barberini Archive



The Library's Archive preserves an inexhaustible number of documents, a major part of which concern various families, Roman properly speaking as well as others who were active in the city. Such is the case for the Barberini family, whose library, manuscripts, books and archive were acquired in 1902.

A recently published study has drawn attention to a part of the Barberini Archive regarding the family's acquisition of silver and the smiths who created it for them. The two volumes of *Disegni, argenti e argentieri dall'Archivio Barberini* (Studi e testi, 542-543), examine inventories prepared on occasion of inheritance, matrimony and relocation, as well as accounting records. From these, one can reconstruct the history of silverware and other decorative, ornamental arts in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rome, since it embraces a family history spanning four generations, from 1604 to 1738. Francesca Barberini and Micaela Dickmann transcribed and studied inventories that reveal the artistic tastes of that age.

This collection speaks not only about the objects but also about the ways in which possessions were transmitted, and how they were kept and protected from dispersion due to various family and historical events.

The publication includes, as an iconographic aid, 60 pages of drawings, now in the Barberini Archive, made for various decorative arts, which in large measure Cardinal Carlo Barberini (1630-1704) commissioned; these appear in *Barb. lat.* 9900.

Also presented are three other loose drawings, preserved in one folder (*Arch. Bibl. Indice II, 2696*), of silver objects made in 1797 by Prospero Mallerini (1761-1836). Silver, a precious good, was a tangible economic resource and was used as currency; the metal could be reused to make new objects or given in pledge. The three loose drawings reproduce silver artifacts that were sent to be melted at the Papal Mint following the Treaty of Tolentino (1797) and constitute a concrete historical testimony to the Napoleonic period.

The archive includes numerous commissions from various members of the family, who requested objects to embellish their homes, augment the sacred furnishings of churches, and create gifts for European courts.

From the accounts, we can learn a good deal about Roman silversmiths and their workshops, who often collaborated to create a given object. Each smith had a distinctive mark to affix on his work. To work on his own, the smith had to pass an exam and obtain a license from the University of Goldsmiths and Silversmiths. Many of the diverse and complex techniques employed by these artisans can be seen in this archive.

As the authors stress, «this study seeks to bring to light, through archival documents, the fervid world of Roman craftsmanship that constituted an important economic resource for the social fabric of the time, which today, unfortunately, has largely disappeared».



## *The poetry corner*

### *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*

*(The Daffodils)*

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*



*William Wordsworth*

*The narcissus represents the daze of death, of a death that is perhaps only sleep. Among other things, the flower is a symbol of the sublimation of an ideal. This idealization is linked to a hope so fragile that it disappears at the slightest breath. «The forest, the sky are reflected in the water with Narcissus. He is no longer alone, the universe is reflected with him, it surrounds him and comes alive with the very soul of Narcissus. The world is an immense Narcissus who thinks of himself. Where would one think better than in one own's image?*

*In the crystal of the fountain a gesture disturbs the image and stillness recomposes it. The reflected world is the conquest of calm».*

*Garlands of narcissus were offered to the Furies, who were thought to afflict the wicked. This flower grows in humid places in springtime. This links it to the symbolism of water, to the rhythms of the seasons, and thus to fertility. Hence emerges its ambivalence: death – sleep – rebirth.*

*In Asia narcissus is the symbol of happiness, and it is used to wish one a good year.*

## Visit of Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs



On Monday 14 March, the Latvian Foreign Affairs Minister, Edgars Rinkēvičs, came to the Library via the Galleria Lapidaria, following his meeting with Pope Francis.

He was accompanied by a small delegation including the Latvian Ambassador to the Holy See, Her Excellency Elita Kuzma. In the Vestibule, the Library presented the famous work *Terra Mariana 1186-1888* to its guests, which the Minister had asked to see, and which was displayed by the Library's former Vice-Prefect, Ambrogio Piazzoni.

Until 1918 the term "Terra Mariana" referred to Livonia, the Baltic region encompassing Latvia and Estonia.

The only copy of this work was produced in Riga for Pope Leo XIII. On the hundredth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Latvia and the Holy See in 2021, the two parties agreed to create a reproduction (cfr. OWL nr. 18, April-June 2021, pp. 9-10). The print run for this consisted of ten complete copies and a thousand abridged ones.

After a visit to the Salone Sistino, the guests went to the Sala Kerkorian on the first floor to see the appreciated exhibition inspired by the Papal encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, called *Tutti. Umanità in cammino*.



**Giovanni Battista De Rossi (1822-1894)**  
**Archaeologist and Scriptor**  
**of the Vatican Library**



We remember Giovanni Battista De Rossi on the second centenary of his birth. De Rossi demonstrated «the identity of primitive Christianity and papal Catholicism» and is considered the father of “Christian Archaeology” as a modern scientific discipline.

Born in Rome on 23 February 1822, De Rossi studied Greek epigraphy with a passion and graduated in “Letters and Philosophy” as well as in *utroque iure*. At only twenty years of age, he began scouring subterranean Rome with the Jesuit archaeologist Giuseppe Marchi, and participated in archaeological excavations with Antonio Nibby, preludes to the important discoveries that he would make a few years later.

Angelo Mai, who discovered the palimpsest of Cicero’s *Republic*, opened the doors of the Library to De Rossi. Mai had met the young man in the Galleria Lapidaria, while he was waiting for his father Camillo Luigi (who was conducting some business in the Vatican), and transcribing Greek inscriptions on the walls, even those which were particularly complex and confused due to the interconnectedness of the letters.

De Rossi was named *Scriptor soprannumerarius* in 1844, *scriptor latinus* in 1851, then *emeritus* in 1886, the length of a career that had a tremendous influence on the life of the Vatican Library. He became director of the Library’s Museo Sacro on 3 October 1878 and secretary of the Commission for the publication of catalogues in 1880.

His intense studies, including many explorations yielding new discoveries, issued in numerous publications, such as the *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores*. To him we also owe the *Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, which he edited for thirty years. In 1862 he published the first of three volumes dedicated to *Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, with the second volume appearing in 1867 and the third in 1877.

With Fr. Marchi, De Rossi was asked to establish the Museo cristiano lateranense. He was named to the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology in 1864.

In 1854 he had been invited to work with Theodor Mommsen and Wilhelm Herzog to publish the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, and in 1860 the Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres asked him to be a part of the Commission to publish the works of Bartolomeo Borghesi.

Among the many studies that De Rossi published during his career is the important *De origine historia indicibus scrinii et bibliothecae apostolicae commentatio* of 1886. He undertook further research on Roman topography and Christian epigraphy, all the while his reputation among scholars continued to grow. His conferences attracted many people and students; among them the two Mercati brothers, Giovanni and Angelo, later prefects, the former of the Library, the latter of the Archives.

«Deeply Roman by education and culture, De Rossi was perhaps the scholar most open to international collaboration during the 19th century», as can be seen by his participation in projects sponsored by major European countries.

He was not particularly keen, however, for the new direction of the Library with regard to modernity promoted by Leo XIII. «By his high merit and years of service to the Library, he would have been invited to be a member of its governing Congress» as established by the Leonine Rules (21 March 1885).

In May 1893 De Rossi became paralyzed on his right side, but he continued to work with Louis Duchesne (1843-1922) on the critical edition of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, published in 1894, not long before his death on 20 September 1894.



*The desk of G. B. De Rossi, in the Leonine Hall of the Library; for many decades it has been the working place of the Responsibles for the Printed Books, and then of the Directors of the Department of the Printed Books.*



## The Minister-President of Flanders Visits the Vatican Library



On the morning of 30 March, the Minister-President of Flanders, Jan Jambon visited the Library along with his closest collaborators: His Excellency Patrick Renault, the Belgian Ambassador to the Holy See, *maestro* Bart Demuyt, founder of the Alamire Foundation, and Professor Bart De Moor, President of said Foundation.

This organization takes its name from the Flemish musician (although he was born in Bavaria), Pierre Alamire (Peter Van den Hove, c. 1470-1536), who is particularly well-known as a copyist, composer and instrumentalist.

President Jambon was in Rome to attend an academic meeting on the famous French-Flemish composer Josquin Desprez (Josquinus Pratensis, c. 1450-1521), who was in

the service of the popes between 1489 and 1495 and worked in the Collegio dei Cappellani Cantori.

Last year the Vatican celebrated the fifth centenary since the death of the artist (27 August 1521) and recent renovations in the Sistine Chapel revealed Josquin's signature engraved in the choir loft.

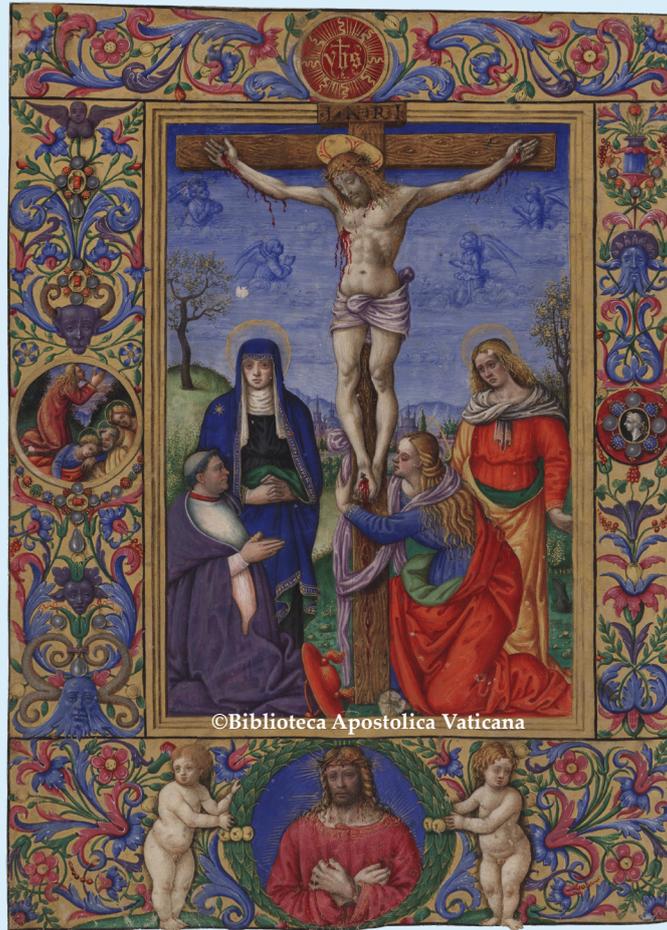
The guests were shown the parchment manuscript *Chig. C. VIII. 234*, the *Libro del coro* (a choir book) transcribed by Pierre Alamire. The manuscript dates from 1496 to 1515.

The manuscript contains masses and motets by various authors including two works by Josquin Desprez, *Missa. L'homme armé sexti toni* (ff. 191v-199r) and *Stabat mater dolorosa* (ff. 241v-245r).



*Happy*

*Easter*



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*Arch. Cap. S. Pietro. A. 47, f. 87v*



## People and Services in the Library: V. Information Services



*The team of the Data Processing Center*



### The Data Processing Center

The computerization of the Vatican Library began in 1985. Fr. Leonard E. Boyle, OP (1923-1999), having become Prefect of the Library the previous year, formed a commission of experts in computers and cataloguing to identify the hardware and software that would best suit the Library's needs. They chose the system MAINFRAME of the European University Institute in Fiesole which had used it for many years. With generous funding provided by a personal friend, Fr. Boyle took charge of the acquisition, motivated by the desire to take concrete steps towards the Library's modernization. He organized a team of three catalogers and three technicians, two of whom were also trained to do the work. Luciano Ammenti, the IT manager of the project, went to the United States, Canada and England to learn the most cutting edge methods and techniques before the Vaticana's Data Processing Center (Centro Elaborazione Dati [CED]) came into existence.

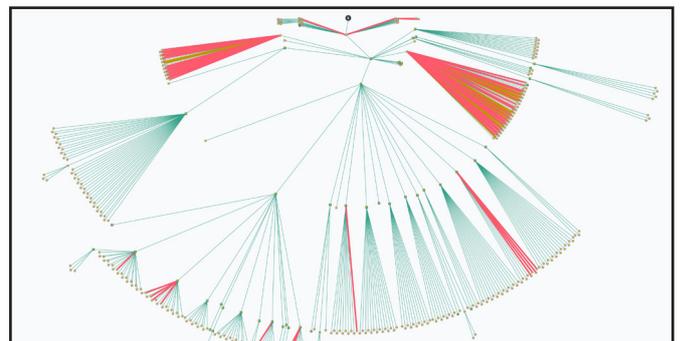
The Library was the first Vatican dicastery to establish an IT system for sharing data, beginning with its own network system (URBS) and then by means of the Internet itself. In this sense the Library facilitated the communication of the Institution as a true PROVIDER, using an Italian domain name, VATLIB.IT, which is still active. Together with the IT Services Coordination, CED is involved in the majority of the activities that occur within the institution. A team of five people offers IT support to the Library's staff, as well as to the readers who use the Library on a daily basis, making available numerous and fundamental library and administrative services.

The team guarantees the proper functioning of software and other systems, including their periodic updating, used by the staff. They also monitor and review various electronic devices: cameras, printers, tools for tracking books via RFID (radio-frequency identification, which is used to ensure the correct ordering of the printed collections and the protection of the books themselves), etc. The CED curates and can support the network infrastructure and its "security policy". Finally, it monitors and restores the proper functioning of the Library's security turnstiles, which are accessed via a personal badge. One of the most important activities of the CED is to oversee the technical organization for the digitalization of the manuscripts, monitoring the procedures involved in the digital acquisition operations so that they are done correctly and preserving the resulting data in the highest quality.

Because the Library's IT infrastructure includes many servers divided between Belvedere and Conciliazione, the CED team must oversee both locations to ensure constant coverage and minimize the response time during a potential disruption of any kind in support of the Library's staff. The CED also guarantees on-call support outside of working hours, necessary for a timely answer to sudden and unforeseen problems that may jeopardize the correct operation of the Library's systems.

To monitor all of its various structural subdivisions, the CED now has at its disposal "Intravue", a powerful tool donated by Panduit, a U.S. data center components company that created the Library's own data center. This sophisticated software can scan the networks according to the mapping structure of the different devices installed within the institution (access points, cameras, WiFi, network switches and servers).

CED is currently running tests to understand this software's full potential. In addition to its ability to see instantaneously the state of every device active within the Library, regardless of their physical location, Intravue can be particularly useful for data security, because it allows one to check the "history" of all connections made to the system.



## IT Services Coordination



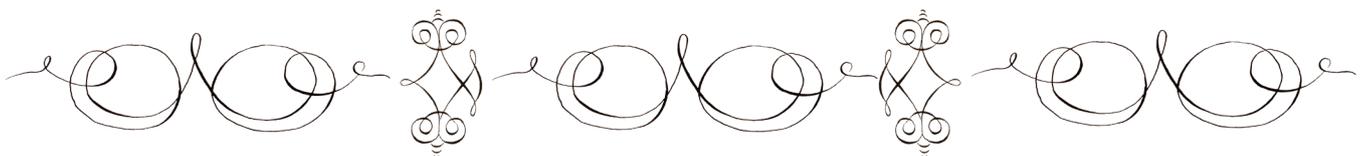
*The IT Services Coordination team*

"The *IT Services Coordination* oversees the Vatican Library's holdings in the digital realm. In accordance with the Prefect's directives, this office designs and manages new developments, conceptual models and other needed functionalities for IT implementation, instructing technicians about the specific needs of the Library with an awareness of the standards and practices of library science.

The *Coordination* therefore attends to the IT and digital policy of the BAV, ensuring its proper application, so that it is compatible with international standards adopted by libraries and with the metadata formats that are essential for data curation. To take an example from the Library's catalogue, the metadata allow for the automatic recognition of elements that make up the descriptive entries in OPAC, facilitating indexing by search engines. This office also oversees the adoption of interoperability protocols: such can be seen in the way the BAV's digital platform can interact with those of other libraries by means of the International Image Interoperability Framework, which allows researchers to compare images with different provenances.

More generally, the office investigates emerging methodologies for dating curation, for the public consultation of digital collections, and for their long term conservation. For the latter, the *Coordination* is working to develop document management tools for the conservation of the BAV's digital archive. Using the FITS image format, the office is experimenting with innovative image analysis techniques and promotes activities for artificial intelligence applications, in collaboration with research institutions and universities.

On a daily basis, the *Coordination* manages the workflow for the digitalization of the manuscripts for which it has developed in-house software to control all phases of the work: from acquisition to the publication of both images and metadata on the web platform of the digital library. Finally, the office trains colleagues in the use of application systems and in the best practices of metadata and catalog syntax and oversees the electronic authority files that are shared by several catalogues and our consultable online through various search engines".



## In memory of the photographer Franco Marini (1935-2022)



*Left: photographers in the Fifties; Marini is the second to the right, first row; the first to the left is Alceste Rossi, the Responsible for the Photographic Lab. Right: Franco Marini in the Nineties*

On 10 February our “ancient” colleague Franco Marini died after a long illness.

Born in 1935 he became one of the youngest collaborators of the Library in 1951, as part of the team of photographers charged to undertake the creation of the Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library. This project was formally instituted in 1953 to produce microfilms for the study of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts at the newly created Pius XII Memorial Library at Saint Louis University. The innovative project, which was followed by other initiatives, employed state-of-the-art instrumentation and reproduced about 70% of the manuscripts on 37,000 microfilms. While accounting for the technological differences, the microfilm project was in many ways similar to the current goal of digitalizing the manuscripts.

Marini completed his military service between 1957 and 1959 and in 1962 he joined the Library.

He attended the School of Photography in Rome in order to become a professional and he spent his entire professional life in the Photographic Laboratory, becoming its leader in 1993.

He worked with such other dicasteries as the Vatican Museums and the Apostolic Archive, and many other ecclesiastical institutions, including ones outside of Rome. In the 1990s he had the important job of converting the Library’s card catalogue for printed books for the new computerized system. Millions of cards were filmed, printed and sent to a large group of collaborators who one by one copied them onto computer discs. This was his last great “undertaking” before retiring from the Library in 2000.

We affectionately remember Franco and offer our deepest sympathy to his wife Maria and the entire Marini family.





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**If you would like to make a contribution to the projects of the Library, please contact:**

**Luigina Orlandi**

**Office of Institutional Advancement ([orlandi@vatlib.it](mailto:orlandi@vatlib.it))**

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