

Online Window into the Library



«Avvisi» dalla Vaticana



A "new" musical manuscript in the collections of the Vatican Library

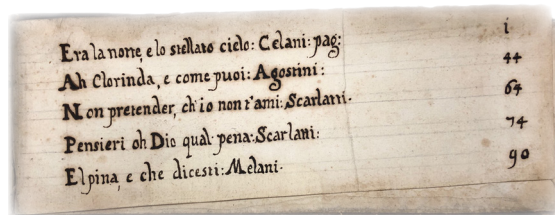
In our days it is not often that we can acquire "new" manuscripts which may enrich the collections of the Library, constituting new sources of research for scholars, but it can certainly happen. We are therefore all the more pleased to report that a small musical codex was recently acquired by the Vatican Library.

The paper manuscript, of oblong format, probably dates back to the late seventeenth century and belonged to the papal cantor Andrea Adami da Bolsena (1663-1742). The cantor became choirmaster of the Pontifical Chapel (1700-1714) thanks in part to the support of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, a great patron of Roman cultural and political life. Adami was also a composer and author of the work, *Osservazioni per ben regolare il Coro dei cantori della Cappella pontificia* (1711). The coat of arms we find on the binding includes a palm and a serpent, three flowers and two cherubs holding a banner; on the borders is the letter "A." The manuscript is embellished with elegant letterhead and contains five cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti, Giuseppe Corsi, Pier Simone Agostini, and Atto Melani. The cantata *Non pretendere ch'io non t'ami*, attributed to Alessandro Scarlatti, and the cantata *Elpina, e che dicesti*, attributed to Atto Melani, are unique pieces, so it will be necessary to put these attributions under careful examination.



Originating more or less around the 1620s, the secular chamber cantata is musically characterized as a composite piece by virtue of its alternation between the recitative and arias. At the beginning of the 18th century, it then crystallized into a succession of closed pieces: recitations and arias, in absolute parallelism with what was happening in the operatic repertoire. It is a composition intended for private enjoyment within noble palaces and was usually performed during so-called "conversations," academic meetings during which various topics were discussed, accompanied by the musical component of the cantata.

The Library was able to acquire this important piece thanks to the generosity of Prof. Warren Kirkendale, a musicologist and benefactor of the Vatican Library who passed away a year ago. Kirkendale had made funds available to the Library for the purchase of publications on music and musical documents that would foster the studies of specialists. He also enabled the enhancement of musical resources preserved in the Papal Library. The professor and his wife Ursula, who passed away in 2012, held close ties to the Library after having carried out many studies there.



The professor bequeathed his archive to the Library. Recently, it was transported here along with papers concerning his research as well as his correspondence of a scholarly nature. After it is sorted and inventoried, it will be made available to scholars.

We extend our grateful remembrance to Warren and Ursula Kirkendale. Their uncommon dedication and affection for our institution is a source of great encouragement to us all.



Semi-annual meeting of the Library staff

On Tuesday, January 16, before the arrival of the readers, all the employees and collaborators of the Vatican Library met in the Reading Room of Printed Books for the first of two scheduled annual meetings with the Library's Government. Here we share the working guidelines for the year 2024, which will be particularly intense, and review its agenda of institutional commitments and activities.

A speech by the Librarian H.E. Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani opened the meeting. Msgr. Zani told about the semi-annual meeting of the University Cinema Council (CUC), which had been held the previous day in the Sistine Hall, in the presence of the Librarian and Msgr. Dario Edoardo Viganò, Vice Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences and president of the MAC Foundation (Audiovisual Memories of Catholicism). The Holy Father had supported the initiative, which entailed the meeting of 130 Italian university professors of cinema, photography, television and audiovisual media. The group met to discuss topics such as "the relationship between academia and audiovisual publishing, artificial intelligence in research, training and film production, and the teaching of audiovisual language in schools as a tool for citizenship."



The Librarian then spoke about two important events that will take place at the Library during the year. The first celebration will be in May, in honor of the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the School of Library Sciences and the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the School of Palaeography and Diplomatics of the Apostolic Archives. The other event involves the meeting with some of the most important libraries in the world "to measure up to the challenges of the future in a fragmented world in which the situation of today's culture worldwide is dramatic and tragic. Our institutions will reflect on the role that they have within this scenario, considering culture that is non-superficial and non-trivial. This is to take place in the fall."

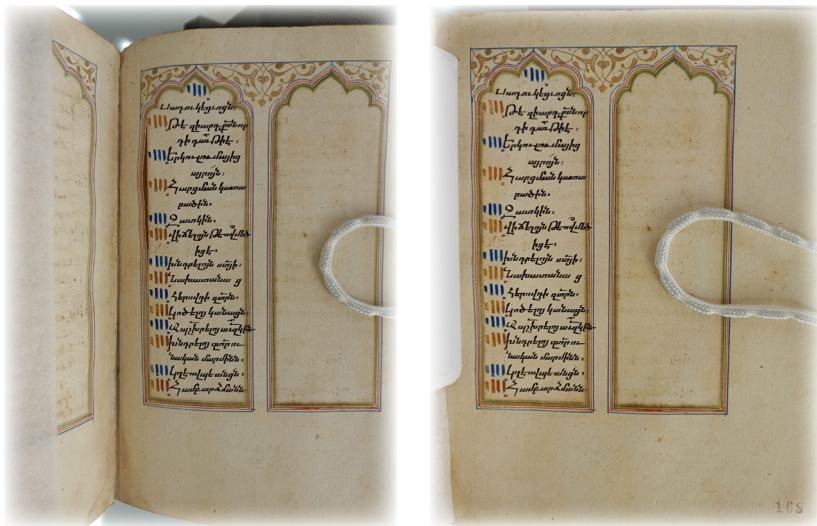
The 2025 Jubilee is in fact just around the corner. We are currently exploring our way to participate in the Jubilee by a possible symbolic element of the Vatican collections as part of the event.

After a discussion about the management of schedules in the daily routine of services, the meeting concluded by referring to the relationship between the ordinary and the extraordinary. After the holidays, which represents an extraordinary time, we enter ordinary time, which we are called to live in an extraordinary way, participating in everything that is asked of us in the spirit of extraordinary time; not even routine is 'ordinary' for those who work and live in the Vatican Library.



A precious Armenian codex just restored

The manuscript *Vat. arm. 40* was finally restored for digitization. It is a *Tetraevangelium* written in 1644 on Spanish paper in the elegant Armenian minuscule called *bolorgir* (round script). The codex opens with a series of sixteen full-page miniatures depicting the life of Christ. The central nucleus of the manuscript consists of the text of the four Gospels, each preceded by the image of the evangelist. "The quality of the manuscript is especially conspicuous from the abundance of decorated initials; the main ones are polychrome and depict human beings, birds, other animals or flowers. This style is in keeping with the tendency towards the development of alphabets decorated with mostly ornithomorphic or floral motifs, used for the initials and also for the text of the incipital pages, and constitutes a characteristic feature of Armenian book art."



f. 168, before and after conservation treatments

The margins of the text of the Gospels are enriched with countless multi-coloured ornamental motifs, along with birds, flowers and fruits. The precious document has not yet been able to be reproduced due to its delicate state, in particular due to cuts on its folios caused by metal gall ink. Thanks to the support of Aid to the Church in Need United States (ACNUSA), delicate conservative treatments were recently made. After those interventions, the manuscript can now be digitized and published online (this last operation is supported by Daniel Kurkdjian), for the benefit of everyone, scholars, lovers of beauty, and the inquisitive.

To the kind supporters Sarkis Boghalian (ACNUSA) and Daniel Kurkdjian we express our deepest gratitude for their generosity.



f. 194, before and after conservation treatments

To the Holy Father for his Library

Last December, a gift sent to the Holy Father arrived at the Library, the first volume of the work *Flora de la Real Expedición botánica del Nuevo Reino de Granada (1738-1816)*. This fifty-volume work began in 1954 and was published by Ediciones Cultura Hispánica in Madrid and the Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica in Bogotá. The publication offers the most important Colombian scholarly work of the 18th century.

The initiative was started in 1952 and was then renewed in 1982 by the governments of Spain and Colombia, which intended to publish the research on flora conducted in Colombia mainly by José Celestino Bruno Mutis y Bosio (1732-1808), a priest from 1772.

Born in Cádiz and died in Santafé de Bogotá, Mutis was a physician, botanist, and professor of philosophy, mathematics, and natural history at the University of Rosario in Santafé de Bogotá, where he began working in 1761.

In 1763 he proposed the research project and the fauna of Colombia to the king, but he had to wait 20 years before getting the authorization and funds to undertake it. He worked on the project from 1783 until his health forced him to leave field research. From Bogotá he followed the work of Francisco Zea, who continued it and sent Mutis the samples to be classified.

During his twenty-five years of research and observations, the Andalusian scholar collected 24,000 plants in his herbarium and had 4,000 color drawings made of many of them, full of faithfully reproduced details, which he sent to Spain.

The volumes are organized according to botanical families, and are embellished with splendid color illustrative plates depicting lush and beautiful plants.



Oligactis volubilis
(Iconografía Mutisiana: 925)
Real Jard. Bot. Madrid



On Thursday, February 8, H.E. Mrs. María Isabel Celáa Diéguez, ambassador of Spain to the Holy See, came to the Vatican to finalize the donation of the work to the papal library. She handed over twenty-two volumes, while other volumes will be sent later. We are especially grateful to the Spanish authorities for this magnificent gift to the Holy Father and his Library.



Bidens rubifolia H.B.K. (Iconografía Mutisiana: 1066)

Remembering artisans of preservation

The history of the Library is also made up of people who are less known or not known at all, but who nonetheless contributed (and continue to contribute) to its greatness through their daily, sometimes invisible work, which has enabled them to grant scholars a service worthy of the history of our Institution.

This time we would like to highlight three esteemed craftsmen who succeeded each other in the direction of the Restoration Laboratory. With their manual dexterity, great experience and profound sensitivity, they contributed much to the preservation of so many important documents, especially manuscripts, to make them usable for research to several generations of scholars. Moreover, they contributed to the formation of young apprentices, when the work of preservation rested on the manual skill that was practiced at a young age and would necessarily change to adapt to the needs of the times.

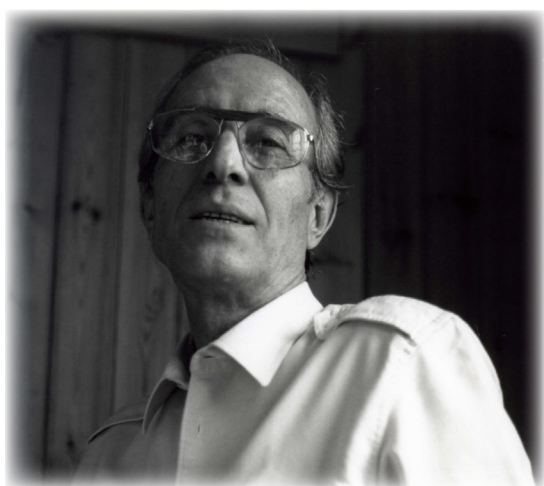


*Prefect Anselm M. Albareda, Cardinal Eugène Tisserant,
Pope John XXIII, Giacobbe Baffa and Ignazio Baldassarre*



Giacobbe Baffa (1931-2008) began his career in the Library as a binder in January 1953, collaborating without a tenured position, after having worked in the Restoration workshop of the Basilian Monastery of Grottaferrata for six years (1945-1952).

In 1960 he was appointed as restorer. He gained a lot of experience in the ten years that preceded his appointment as chief restorer in 1970, replacing Carlo Jori after he retired. The request for promotion was presented to Msgr. Giovanni Benelli, then the Substitute in the Secretariat of State: he «gained esteem [...] for his dedication to his work, as well as for his excellent technical preparation which qualifies him to occupy the position to which he was assigned». And in 1988 he became a master restorer.



Baffa was a “specialist” in bindings, especially those made of wood. He particularly loved working with wood, metal and leather. His request to retire was presented to the prefect (1984-1997) Leonard E. Boyle (1923-1999) in 1993, who responded: «I have taken good note of your legitimate desire to retire, after 40 years of commendable and appreciated service, first as Binder, then as Restorer of codices and finally as Master Restorer. [...] I accept, albeit with deep regret, your request for retirement [...]». In July 1984 he was awarded the title of Commander of the Order of San Silvestro Pope. He continued to visit colleagues in the following years, always cheerful and kind to everyone.



*Life has two precious gifts: beauty and truth.
I found the first in the heart of those who love
and the second in the hand of the worker.*

(Khalil Gibran)



Piero Tiburzi (1940-1995) was hired on a trial basis as an apprentice bookbinder on 1 December 1955, while his position was secured in the Library on June 1, 1960. On that occasion, the Prefect declared, "certainly his diligence and industriousness will always be such as to satisfy the Management of the Library". Having completed his military service from February 1962 to June 1963, he thereafter resumed his work as a bookbinder. In April of 1968 he was appointed restorer, a "reward for his activity and an incitement to continue his service with renewed fervor". In the nineties he took the responsibility of the Laboratory. A man of large build and of a good character, he was a helpful person and good company. No difficulty seemed to frighten him in his work; in times of urgent need, he also knew how to improvise and find the most suitable solutions to the situation. With his large hands he was able to work with every kind of material and of any size, from large prints to small books of hours, with equal skill and great delicacy. Having passed away prematurely due to a serious illness, the responsibility of the Laboratory was entrusted to Giuseppe Nuti.



Giuseppe Nuti (1937-2017), known to all as "Arduino", arrived to the Library at the age of fifteen. He first worked from May 1952-June 1957 with the team of photographers who participated in the reproduction project for St. Louis University. In 1961 he was hired as a bookbinder's apprentice and a year later he was a bookbinder. In 1970 he was appointed restorer, while in 1998 he was formally appointed as head of the Laboratory. Of a shy and introverted nature, he was a man of few words, but reliable and trustworthy. A specialist in parchment, he restored, among other things, the famous "Falconer" (*De arte venandi cum avibus*) of Frederick II, *Pal. lat.* 1071.

He asked to retire on January 1, 2000, but Prefect (1997-2007) Raffaele Farina asked him to postpone his retirement for a few months, until July 31, to facilitate the work of the Laboratory until the summer break. The Prefect described him as such: "A man of extraordinary loyalty to the Library and of uncommon sensitivity towards his book heritage, in recent years he has been able to manage very difficult situations with intelligence and patience, becoming the point of reference for the restoration laboratory." On April 8, 2000, Pope John Paul II awarded him the honor of Knight of the Order of San Silvestro.

We would like to end this brief remembrance with Giacobbe Baffa's last greeting to his colleagues on Easter 2008 (he would pass away a month later on 24 April). "*Latina, 28/3/08. Dear all, with the passing of time images blur, memories slowly fade away, and everything is part of a lived past, even one intensely lived but now distant and intangible. Receiving an Easter card from all of you has been the occasion of deep emotion for me. To see united in a single wish so many friends who have lived and our living our difficult, interesting and splendid work has made me feel alive again and to realize that a person in his not easy existence has left a memory, has represented a moment also in his professional life and in his relationship with others. You could not have given me a better gift and for that I will always be grateful for the rest of my days. With affection, Baffa Francesco Giacobbe.*" To Giacobbe, Piero and Arduino, our grateful and affectionate remembrance.

*Crucifixes from the Vatican Library
(and a Deposition)*



*Crucifix, 14th cent.
Tempera on wood
BAVOA.156*



*Crucifix, 20th cent.
Polychrome wood; base and decorations
in silver and metal*



*Sergio Capellini, Crucifix, ca. 1975.
Bronze; wood and fabric
BAVOA.700*



*Crucifix, 19th cent.
Ivory; wood
BAVOA.138*



*Crucifix, 20th cent.
Burnished metal; wood
BAVOA.139*



Malachite Cross, 1846-1878
Malachite and metal.
Gift of Prince A. Demidoff to Pius IX
BAVOA.520



Crucifix, 1980
Monogrammist I.H.
Wood and metal.
BAVOA.470



Scipione Pulzone, c. 1550-1598
Deposition in the tomb (oil on copper) 1566-1572.
Among the painted figures Pope Pius V (1566-1572)
BAVOA.33



Crucifix, 19th cent.
Metal and wood; base in polychrome marble.
Hebrew inscription on the title block
BAVOA.706



Crucifix 18th cent.
Metal; wooden base.
Inscription on the title block
BAVOA.707

“Souvenirs de Babel”
(March 1 - June 22, 2024)

The fifth exhibition dedicated to the dialogue between the Vatican Library and contemporary artists was inaugurated on Friday, March 1: this time it is the Frenchman Alain Fleischer, photographer as well as director and writer. The exhibition focuses in particular on photography and how much it can convey of a past that is now history, but which is also an interpretation of the present, and suggestive of new ideas for the future. The historical photos of the Vatican Library and its locales, from 1862 to 1963, are particularly evocative and inspire many reflections.

The exhibition starts at the entrance to the Library: an image from the work *Tower of Babel* by Athanasius Kircher, published in 1679, looms large above the entrance arch and almost intimidates those who enter the Library. The work refers to “the Institution in its capacity as a Babel of languages and spaces.” This special architectural structure gives way to the rest of the architecture of images of the Library that line the staircase. While going up the staircase, the visitor comes across some original shots of the French artist and the exhibition continues up until the Kerkorian Room, the room created specifically to host temporary exhibitions.



Some of Fleischer's works, including casts especially made for this event, have been housed in the exhibition hall. Others are inside the Barberini Room, the large room that embraces the monumental library built in the 17th century by the architect Giovanni Battista Soria and which long housed the original nucleus of the well-known collection, a babel of splendid publications.



The Poetry Corner

All That's Past

Very old are the woods;
And the buds that break
Out of the brier's boughs,
When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are—
Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
Roves back the rose.
Very old are the brooks;
And the rills that rise
Where snow sleeps cold beneath
The azure skies
Sing such a history
Of come and gone,
Their every drop is as wise
As Solomon.
Very old are we men;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales;
We wake and whisper awhile,
But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of amaranth lie.

Walter de la Mare



Chig.C.V.149, f. 7r



Easter had come, the festival of light and liberation for all nature! Winter had bid farewell, shrouded in a dark veil of fog, and above the turgid racing clouds spring is now approaching.

It had sent its storm messengers ahead to awaken the earth from its long sleep, and they trembled over the woods and plains, beat their wings on the mighty peaks of the alps and shook the sea from its depths.

It was in the air like a wild fight and bellowing, and yet almost a cry of victory came out of it: because among the spring storms, quivering with life, the Resurrection was announced.

Elisabeth Bürstenbinder



Happy Easter

A certificate for participants in the course on Hebrew manuscripts



The award ceremony for certificates of the “Program Study” of the “Marshall T. Meyer” Latin American Rabbinical Seminary, which occurred in an intensive week of July 2023, took place on the morning of February 13 in the Barberini Hall of the Library. Some participants came in person for the occasion, while others connected by zoom. Claudia Montuschi, Director of the Vatican Library's Department of Manuscripts awarded the certificates.

Prefect Don Mauro Mantovani welcomed the guests and thanked the teachers for their work and for the initiative which proposed a specialist training program with deepening the knowledge of numerous Jewish manuscripts preserved in our institution. The course proved to be a novelty of its kind and was possible thanks to the special collaboration in the context of an active interreligious dialogue promoted by the Holy Father.

After an initial meeting in the Vatican in 2022, Claudia Montuschi, and Delio Vania Proverbio, *scriptor* and orientalist of the Library, collaborated with representatives from the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary for several months to prepare the course program.

The results obtained go well beyond what was learned from the manuscript study by the various participants, who coming from different universities around the world and belonging to different religions. The event provided a positive contribution toward a future of dialogue and exchange with the many cultural realities represented in our Institution.





The ambassador of Luxembourg

On the afternoon of Thursday 11 January H.E. Jean Claude Kugener, ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the Holy See, and Don Jean Paul Muller, SDB, ecclesiastical counselor of the Embassy, met with the Librarian H.E. Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani. During the friendly meeting, the kind guests shared some initiatives that are being developed in Luxembourg to celebrate Saint Willibrord, an Anglo-Saxon monk, who was born in Northumbria in 658 and who died in Echternacht (Luxembourg) in 739. He was consecrated bishop of Utrecht in 695 and his work for evangelization took place in a part of the Netherlands, in northern Belgium, in some areas of Germany and in Luxembourg. Our best wishes to our kind guests for the good work underway.



The Slovak Academy of Sciences

On the morning of January 17, the Librarian H.E. Msgr. Zani met the Director of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Prof. Pavol Šajgalík, the Vice Director Prof. Peter Samuely, the Military Ordinary of Slovakia Msgr. František Rábek, and researchers from the Academy of Sciences, accompanied by H.E. Msgr. Nicola Girasoli, Apostolic Nuncio to Slovakia, and by the ambassador to the Holy See, H.E. Marek Lisansky.



On this pleasant occasion, the authorities of the Slovak Academy of Sciences wanted to present some gifts to the Library, including the copy of a ceremonial silver bowl from the treasure of a Byzantine jeweler (Slovakia, Zemiansky Vrbovok, 7th century). We express our gratitude to the kind guests.

After the meeting the guests visited the historical rooms of the Apostolic Library.

Representatives from the University of Notre Dame

On February 1, members of the Board of Trustees and other administrators of Notre Dame University (Indiana) visited the Vatican Library after an audience with the Holy Father. The group, made up of over 100 people, included the president of the University, Rev. John Jenkins, C.S.C., and the President-Elect, Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.

The Librarian, H.E. Msgr. Zani, spoke some words of welcome and expressed his hope for continued collaboration with the University. There was then an exchange of gifts between the two institutions.

After the preliminary greetings, gift exchange, and a brief presentation on the history of the papal institution, there followed a visit to a small exhibition of manuscripts, including one containing thirteenth-century sermons from the University of Paris, long studied by Astrik L. Gabriel, O.Praem., former director of the Medieval Institute of Notre Dame; some medals, including one dedicated to the memory of John F. Kennedy; and some facsimiles of Vatican manuscripts placed on the large table in the Vestibule, which interested guests were able to browse.



Finally, the representatives of Notre Dame University visited the Library's historic room, including the very special "book" that is the Sistine Hall, in the company of some employees of the papal institution.



Joseph O'Connor

Last March 4, the well-known Irish writer Joseph O'Connor came to visit us, whose latest story *My father's house* ("There are many rooms in my Father's house", *John*, 14:2-6) was recently published in Italian.

The story is set in Rome during its occupation by the German army (September 1943-June 1944) and is inspired by the extraordinary story bravely experienced by Hugh O'Flaherty (1898-1963), an Irish monsignor from the County of Kerry who was staying in the residence of the German clergy in the Vatican.

With the concrete and diverse help of the "choir," a group of friends that also included British ambassador Francis d'Arcy Osborne and the singer Delia Murphy Kierman, Msgr. O'Flaherty helped save the lives of many politically and religiously persecuted people.

The Ambassador of India



Last February 28 H.E. Jaideep Mazumdar, Ambassador of India to the Holy See and his spouse, Mrs. Parvati Mazumdar met the Librarian, H.E. Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani for a friendly conversation last February.

At the end of the meeting the kind guests were able to visit the Vatican Library and satisfy some curiosities they had regarding the Institution, its mission, and its peculiarities.

We are also grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Mazumdar for mentioning the possibility to develop initiatives to be undertaken together on topics of common interest.



The Council of the Principality of Monaco

On the afternoon of the same day, after a visit to the Vatican Museums, members of the Council of the Principality of Monaco visited the Library, accompanied by H.E. Mr. Philippe Orengo, ambassador of the Principality to the Holy See.

After some words of welcome addressed by our Librarian and greetings on behalf of the guests pronounced by the ambassador, the large and very interested group listened to news regarding the history of the papal library while visiting its most important rooms.

Pleased with this nice meeting and new acquaintances, we look forward to future collaborations with all of them.



Mr. Jun Sawada, the partnership with NTT continues



*Mr. Sawada under the fresco with the embassy
Tensho accompanying Sixtus V to St. John Lateran for the
"Taking of Possession" (May 1585)*

On Tuesday February 27 in the vestibule of the Library, a meeting took place between the authorities of the Library, and representatives of the Japanese company Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT). The Librarian, H.E. Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Prefect Don Mauro Mantovani, the Vice Prefect Timothy Janz, the head of the Coordination of IT Services Paola Manoni met Mr. Jun Sawada, Chairman and member of the board of the company, the director of the Chairman's office, Mrs. Madoka Ikeda and Patrizio Mapelli, director of NTT DATA Group Corporation.

Themes relating to the exploration of forms of cooperation were discussed in the meeting, in order to promote reflection on the use of generative artificial intelligence as well as its ethical implications. Possible support from NTT for BAV initiatives in the field of "digital humanities" was also discussed.

We thank Mr. Sawada and, on his behalf, we thank the entire Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation for all the work done together in recent years and for what we will be able to do together in the near future.

Arigatō NTT



Martin Scorsese



“The documents preserved in the Marega collection are fundamental for reconstructing the vicissitudes of Christianity in Japan, from the general edict of prohibition (1612) up until the end of the Edo period (1868).”

During the first visit of the well-known American director of Italian origin, some significant documents from the collection made by Don Marega were illustrated.

The recent visit took place on January 31st, after the Wednesday general audience with the Holy Father. Before the audience, the director had been able to converse briefly with Pope Francis in the Pontiff’s study, an occasion that followed others he was able to have over the last few years.

Mr. Martin Scorsese wished to visit the papal library again, after the first time, November 2016, the year of the release of his film *Silence*. The plot, based on the historical novel of the same name by Shūsaku Endō, tells the story of two young Jesuits who arrived in Japan immediately after the massacre of Shimabara (1637), and narrates the drama of the persecutions of Catholics in Japan during the period of the Tokugawa shogunate in the 17th century.

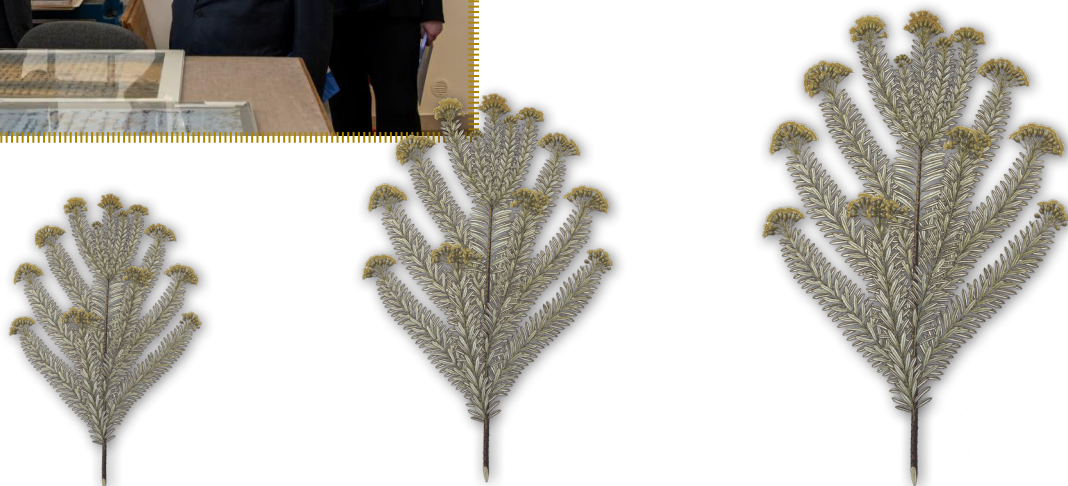
The Vatican contains a very important archive of around 14,000 documents relating to the history of Christianity in Japan collected by the Salesian Mario Marega (1902-1978), missionary in Japan from 1929 to 1978.



Mr. Scorsese particularly focused on the works carried out by the restoration and photographic laboratories.

Scorsese is currently preparing a film based on the novel *A life of Jesus*, by the same author as *Silence*.

We are pleased with this new visit and Mr. Scorsese’s interest in our institution, which we hope will inspire him for future projects. Until we meet again!



"Thesaurum fidei: missionari martiri e Cristiani nascosti in Giappone"

On January 24, a new volume was presented in the Sistine Hall of the Library, entitled *Thesaurum fidei: missionary martyrs and hidden Christians in Japan, 300 years of heroic fidelity to Christ*, the proceedings of a conference held in Lucca in May 2023, edited by Olimpia Niglio and Paolo Giulietti.

Last December, another initiative was dedicated to the same topic: an exhibition in which the Vatican Library participated with the manuscript *Urb. lat. 816(2)*, containing the "Report of the affairs of Maluco [Moluccas], China, and Japan sent by the provincial [Father] [of the Jesuits] of India to the Royal Father General of the Society of Jesus by letters from Cocino dated January 14, 1587."

The event occasioned a new opportunity for detailed study, "a unique opportunity for interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Italy and Japan." H.E. Akira Chiba, ambassador of Japan to the Holy See, also took part in both projects.



The first contacts between Japan and Europe date back to the mid-16th century, when Francisco Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary, arrived in 1549, starting the "Christian century" with his activity of evangelization. His work paved the way for the arrival of many Europeans; churches were built and many people converted to Christianity. In 1639 the shogunate Tokugawa decreed the expulsion of Western Christians.

Hideyoshi's edict (1536-1598) of 1587 began the period of Christian persecution by prohibiting missionary activity. In 1597 the first twenty-six Christians were martyred in Nagasaki.

Of that long period of great suffering, many testimonies survive in the letters and writings of the missionaries, documents of great historical and human value.



From the left.: Don M. Mantovani, Don F. Belluomini, Prof. O. Niglio, Msgr. C. Pasini, H.E. Msgr A.V. Zani, Fr. A. Cocolicchio, H.E. Msgr. P. Giulietti



Only a few years before the edict, in 1582, the Tensho embassy left Nagasaki for Europe, arriving in Italy in March 1585. A fresco in the Sistine Hall recalls the presence of the four young Japanese ambassadors who after pledging their obedience to the pontiff, accompanied Sixtus V to Saint John Lateran after his election.

Even during the era of suppression, Christianity continued to survive, but in a hidden way, and sometimes mixed with pre-existing religious forms, Buddhism and Shinto. Those who "preserved and shaped their faith by translating it into peculiar morphologies, especially that of worship," were defined as *kakure kirishitan*, "hidden Christians."



For many generations, Christian communities "secretly managed to preserve beliefs and ritual forms, especially those of the sacrament of baptism, connected with the faith received from the missionaries, although in the absence of the latter and of any form of ordained clergy." And this continued until 1873, when the ban on Christianity was abolished and when many Christian communities, with the guidance of missionaries, returned to the Catholic Church. Other communities wanted to remain independent and still are today. They maintained lifestyles and ceremonial practices inspired by Christianity which were passed down during the long clandestine period. "The characteristics of such expressions of the sacred, and in general of faithfully preserved customs, can provide persuasive evidence to reconstruct the history of a piety crafted in Christian moulds, but also in those shaped by Buddhism, Shinto and ancestral customs widespread in populations of the countryside, coasts and islands of Japan."

*Annual meeting with
Les Amis de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*



Last January 18, the organizing committee of the “Fonds des Amis de la Bibliothèque Vaticane” association met. Les Amis, operating within the “Fondation Roi Baudouin,” has the aim of supporting the Library's projects. As previous meetings (such as January of 2023), it takes stock of initiatives undertaken in favor of the Library with projects sent over time, together with the Vatican authorities. Following the meeting in the Barberini Hall, some of the members interested in learning about the Library, its history and its collections were able to visit the historic rooms of the Vatican Library.

After lunch the whole group returned to the Library for a visit to the photographic and restoration laboratories, where they were able closely to observe the work being carried out. The directors of the two departments showed them around and the guests could closely examine some manuscripts in care of the departments at that moment and admire how much the Papal Library does to safeguard, and at the same time, spread and preserve culture.



*International Prize of Thomas Aquinas to Don Mauro Mantovani,
Prefect of the Vatican Library*



We are in the midst of the three-year jubilee of Saint Thomas: 700 years since his canonization celebrated in 2023; 750 years from the saint's death celebrated in 2024 and 800 years of his birth to be celebrated in 2025.

On this special occasion, the Circolo San Tommaso d'Aquino awarded the international prize of Thomas Aquinas to the Prefect of the Vatican Library, Don Mauro Mantovani. The ceremony took place last March 9th in the church of Santa Maria della Libera di Aquino (Frosinone).

The president of the Club, Andrea Gagliarducci, stated: "with this year's issuing of the prize, we have rewarded a 'classic' vision of Thomism, as we are convinced that returning to the roots and to the thought of Thomas is necessary in an era like the present one, characterized by a fragmentation of knowledge. This prize awarded to Don Mauro Mantovani is part of a process undertaken in recent years, which aims to promote Thomas Aquinas as a European Saint and cultural model for today's society." Congratulations to Don Mauro!



The Vatican Library Review

The latest issue of *The Vatican Library Review* [2.2 \(2023\)](#), is devoted to textual transmission, the critical edition of texts, and the way various cultures handle that tradition. As we know, ancient texts do not normally survive in their author's autograph. Copies produced over centuries modify the original texts which results in versions that differ from the original. Systematic interventions are therefore needed to heal such textual corruptions. The only characteristic shared by all ancient texts are that they suffer from such variations inevitably produced over the course of time. These cannot possibly be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone.

The issue's articles treat the various problems encountered, for example, by editors of Greek technical treatises, such as the mathematical texts discussed by Fabio Acerbi. Dániel Kiss confronts the issue of an eighteenth-century edition of Catullus, allegedly based upon an ancient manuscript later believed to not exist.

András Németh analyzes a well-known fragment of the dialogue between the historian Polybius and Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, which has long remained illegible in the palimpsest codex *Vat. gr. 73*. Prior to this study, the text was known only indirectly, and that widely accepted solution differs from the passage as present in the manuscript.

The problem of textual transmission is not limited to Latin and Greek Antiquity. Lianbin Dai exposes the editorial practice concerning the texts of Confucianism. His study highlights the method of Chinese philologists, who did not exclude any available witnesses in order to propose a "pure" text, as in the case of the Western tradition; rather, they proposed all textual possibilities, leaving the reader to decide on the correct interpretation.

In conclusion, textual transmission does not occur in a linear manner; they involve autographs or authorial revisions and later copies, complete texts and abridged versions, manuscripts and printed or even digital versions, and texts transmitted alone or with commentaries. The critical edition of texts is always a challenge, being an arduous but intriguing path.

Midterm Meeting of International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (22-24 March 2024)

IFLA is the most important international library association. Founded in 1927 and divided into different sections, it organizes a conference each year during the month of August in a different place around the world. This encounter provides an occasion, “a space to exchange ideas, promote international cooperation and development in all sectors of library science and computer science.” Delegates from around the world participate in the event.

The first IFLA conference was organized in Italy (Rome, Florence, Venice) in 1929 and on that occasion the delegates were also able to meet Pope Pius XI, who was a librarian for the greater part of his life and who always remained so at heart.



In the spring, different sections of IFLA organize meetings in collaboration with the professional community of the host country, to delve deeper into specific topics, and to prepare for the annual conference. This year the sections Environment, Sustainability and Libraries (ENSULIB), Library Theory and Research (LIBTHEORY), Preservation and Conservation (PRESCONS), School Libraries (SCHOOL), SIGs Library History (LIBHIST) and Religions: Libraries and Dialogue (RELINDIAL), organized a three-day midterm meeting in Rome, from March 22 to 24, in collaboration with the Vatican Library, the Lasallian Library and the Academy of Vivarium Novum.

The first day took place in the Vatican Library and was divided into four main sessions. The topic of digital conservation and the challenges it entails was discussed with a focus on research, sustainability and the reuse of digital resources. For the Vatican Library, Paola Manoni, head of the Coordination of IT Services, participated together with Giuliano Giuffrida, and Manlio Miceli, responsible for the Library’s Data Processing Centre. Raffaella Vincenti, secretary of the Library, chaired the first part of the meeting.

The other two days were dedicated to topics relating to computer sciences. On March 23, the meeting took place at the General House of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and focused on innovative research methods in the field of computer science. On Sunday, March 24 at Villa Falconieri, in Frascati, other issues regarding tradition and innovation were discussed, including the projects being developed by the Academy of Vivarium Novum, with particular attention to libraries and archives.

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*If you wish to make a contribution to the projects of the Library, please write to:
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