



«Avvisi» dalla Vaticana

*"Conservata et perfecta aliis tradere"*  
*Libraries in dialogue*



Barb. lat. 4357, ff. 14v-15r

From Thursday, November 14 to Saturday, November 16, meetings will be held at the headquarters of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Vatican Apostolic Library among representatives of twenty-four libraries from different countries around the world. They will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the challenges that the rapid changes of our time also impose on institutions that preserve and promote culture.

In order to continue to offer its own contribution to the link between past and present in the ongoing change of civilization, the Vatican Apostolic Library and those who work in it at various levels, grades and competen-

cies, has promoted this special opportunity for discussion. The Institution brings into focus some of its specific peculiarities and its five-hundred-year history, with its inestimable patrimony; its current mission, which combines the apparently antithetical needs, of the preservation and dissemination of the treasures it guards.

On the basis of an *instrumentum laboris* prepared by an internal study group at the Vatican and shared with the participants, the discussion will focus on experiences already realized or in progress to be presented and debated in specially set up work tables.



The themes open to consideration include: library collections, with the management of preservation spaces and projects to increase them; new technologies and communication strategies at the service of libraries with IT tools, metadata management, platforms hosting digital collections and long-term digital preservation, web and social channels, and artificial intelligence. Finally, cultural policies and orientation of studies in the library conceived as a research institution and not just a place where books are stored, coordinating and integrating a wide variety of scholarly projects and scientific investigations will be addressed.

To prepare for the meeting over the summer, online meetings were organized to define and share a method of discussion, formulate some thought-provoking questions, and to prepare a common document, to be approved at the event, to be offered as a contribution from the work done.

“The dialogue that we intend to initiate will start by listening to each other's experiences and pooling the most significant initiatives carried out by individual institutions in specific areas.” Together we will try to imagine a stimulating future for the operators and, above all, for all those who use the services of the libraries and who would like to use them.

We wish our best to all participants!



### *A gift from Thailand*

On the morning of September 18, the authorities and some representatives of the Library welcomed a small delegation from Thailand. The guests arrived there at the end of a meeting with the Holy Father.

The guests presented His Holiness with a 80-volume publication intended for the papal library on the occasion of the 72nd birthday of the Southeast Asian country's ruler, His Majesty Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaoc-haoyuhua.

The work, *“The World Tipitaka Saj-jha-ya Phonetic Recitation, Kong Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit Commemorative 2016 edition: A gift of Peace and Wisdom for all”*, contains the Buddhist canon in the Pali language according to the Thai scripture, and was published on the 70th anniversary of the ascension to the throne of the ruler's father, Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The delegation consisted of the Ambassador of Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Mr. Chittipat Tongprasroeth, Venerable Phra Rajabuddhivaraguna (Amaro Bhikkhu), abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery and chairman of the monastic division of the project concerning the *World Tipitaka*, and three embassy officials, Ms. Kundhinee Aksornwong, Ms. Bannarasi Koanantakul and Ms. Manika Mekprayoonthong.





Vat. lat. 797, f. 1r, detail



Summa V. 239, fig. 88, detail

From October 25 to December 14, in the Kirk Kerkorian Room on the first floor of the Sistine building, the Vatican Apostolic Library will host an exhibition entitled *"The Book and the Spirit. Exhibition of manuscripts and documentary resources on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of the death of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio and Thomas Aquinas."*

The Library, which preserves among its greatest treasures, autographs, manuscripts of the works and documents of the life and activity of the two doctors of the Church, had hosted a similar exhibition in 1974 on the occasion of the seventh centenary. Now, as then, it will showcase a selection of significant pertinent items including manuscripts, printed books, and medals.

Among the most precious pieces of the patrimony to be put on display for the occasion are the two autographs written by Thomas's own hand, *Vat. lat. 9850* and *Vat. lat. 9851*.

Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590), significant to the history of our library for having commissioned the building of its present location, associated the two saints, *Doctor Angelicus* and *Doctor Seraphicus* in the Letter *Triumphantis Hierusalem* to the image of the two candelabra of *Rev. 11:4*: "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks that stand before the Lord of the earth." Leo XIII (1878-1903) in 1885 took up the same image in his *Aeterni Patris*, an encyclical which praised the philosophies of the two doctors but prompted that Thomas's doctrine be studied and propagated throughout the Church.



## A Jubilee coin for the Jubilee 2025



Mt.TsP.SenatusRomanus\_67\_D-R

The Medagliere of the Vatican Library preserves some 2,000 coins found near the tomb of St. Peter. The coins were found during excavations promoted by Pope Pius XII in the years 1939-1949; their intrinsic value is in most cases low and they are often ruined, but for the history of the Church they are of exceptional importance since they constitute a fundamental document for the history of the pilgrimage to the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul, which began very early. One of the most important moments of the visit *ad limina apostolorum* for the pilgrim was the laying of a coin, usually from one's country of origin, as long as the tombs of the apostles remained accessible, or its "casting," when pilgrims were no longer allowed to approach them because of the various architectural structures that had been superimposed on them. The coins that we preserve represent only a small percentage of those that were "thrown" on the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles; they are those that escaped the collection that the basilica workers did on a daily basis.

Among them is a small coin, a "picciolo" (*denarius parvus*) of the Rome mint with the Holy Face of Veronica on one side, the issuance of which is placed precisely during the Jubilee of 1450, called by Nicholas V Parentucelli (1447-1455), considered the founder of the modern Vatican Library.

The veneration of Veronica, "that blessed image which Jesus Christ left us as an imprint of his most beautiful visage" (Dante, *Vita Nova -New Life-*, XLI), was another

fundamental moment of the pilgrimage to Rome.

Its cult was very ancient; there are sure traces of it as far back as the 10th century. During the first Jubilee in history, that of 1300, chronicles relate that Veronica was displayed in the Vatican basilica every Friday and every solemn feast day.

Our coin represents the offering left at St. Peter's by a pilgrim of hope (probably an inhabitant of the city of Rome itself) during the Jubilee of 1450, the year that saw an extraordinary number of pilgrims in the Eternal City, so much so that it is remembered as one of the most attended in the history of the Holy Years.

To celebrate the Jubilee 2025, dedicated to the pilgrims of hope, the Vatican Library decided to reproduce the "picciolo" of 1450, and wanted to include it within the reproduction of the "Trophy of Gaius," the aedicule that around 200 A.D. already indicated to the first pilgrims the location of St. Peter's tomb and that today is enclosed in the "niche of the Palli" inside the Vatican Confession. The reproduction of the aedicule was done using a three-dimensional cliché.

The coin, accompanied by a bilingual introductory booklet, is housed in a canvas slipcase.

We sincerely thank two American benefactor families, Laura and Michael Hayde, and Suzanne and Steve Cameron, who, through The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation, wholeheartedly supported the initiative and enabled its implementation.



## *A preservation project with the Museum of the Bible*

The Washington Museum of the Bible and the Vatican Library recently carried out a project concerning the restoration of four manuscripts and two printed volumes.

The codices included *Vat. lat.* 9350, a Bible dating from the 13th century; *Vat. gr.* 2144, from the 10th century, containing the Gospels, as well as *P. I. O. slav.* 2, from the 16th century; and *Vat. et.* 1 also dates from the 16th century and contains the texts of the Gospels. Then there is a rare two-volume edition of texts from the Jewish tradition, the *Mishnāh Tōrāh*, a monumental collection of religious laws dating back to Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon, 1135-1204), published in 1550-1551, *R. G. Bible.* S. 84 (1); *R. G. Bible.* S. 84 (2).

Three of the four selected codices needed delicate conservation treatments so that they could then be digitized; the two printed volumes were particularly damaged and needed special work by restorers to return to consultation.



*Vat. et. 1*

The Library committed to lending the restored works to be displayed in the Museum's headquarters in Washington when the work is completed. In addition, it will provide the American institution with some photos of the interventions carried out and a short video that narrates and presents some moments of the restorations.

We are very pleased with this opportunity for collaboration with the Museum of the Bible, which we hope will have further developments in the future.



*R. G. Bibbia. S. 84*

*Vat. gr. 2144*



*Vat. lat. 9350*



Located in the vicinity of Capitol Hill, the Museum was opened in 2017 with the aim of telling the story of the Bible and witnessing the impact of biblical texts in human history, through the testimonies it preserves and engaging the different faiths that recognize the Bible as a sacred text, by hosting biblical or Bible-related works from different institutions around the world.

In keeping with a well-established tradition, the Vatican Library is once again offering its agenda for the coming year, a special year, the Jubilee Year.

Here is its Introduction: "For the Catholic Church, 2025 is an Ordinary Jubilee Year. The Vatican Library, as a scientific institution that both preserves its collections and facilitates research, will participate in this event by revealing to the world for the first time one of its many treasures: a collection of approximately 1,200 newspapers, comprising over 1,000 distinct titles, originating from the most distant, if not remote, locations on the planet and dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This collection encompasses a diverse range of languages, including Germanic, Celtic, Romance, Chinese, Arabic, Slavic, Altaic, Indo-Aryan, Finno-Ugric, Bantu, Austronesian, the indigenous languages of America, Armenian, Japanese, Iranian, and Polynesian. It reflects the breadth of vision, insatiable linguistic curiosity, and international career of its collector, Cesare Poma (1862-1932).

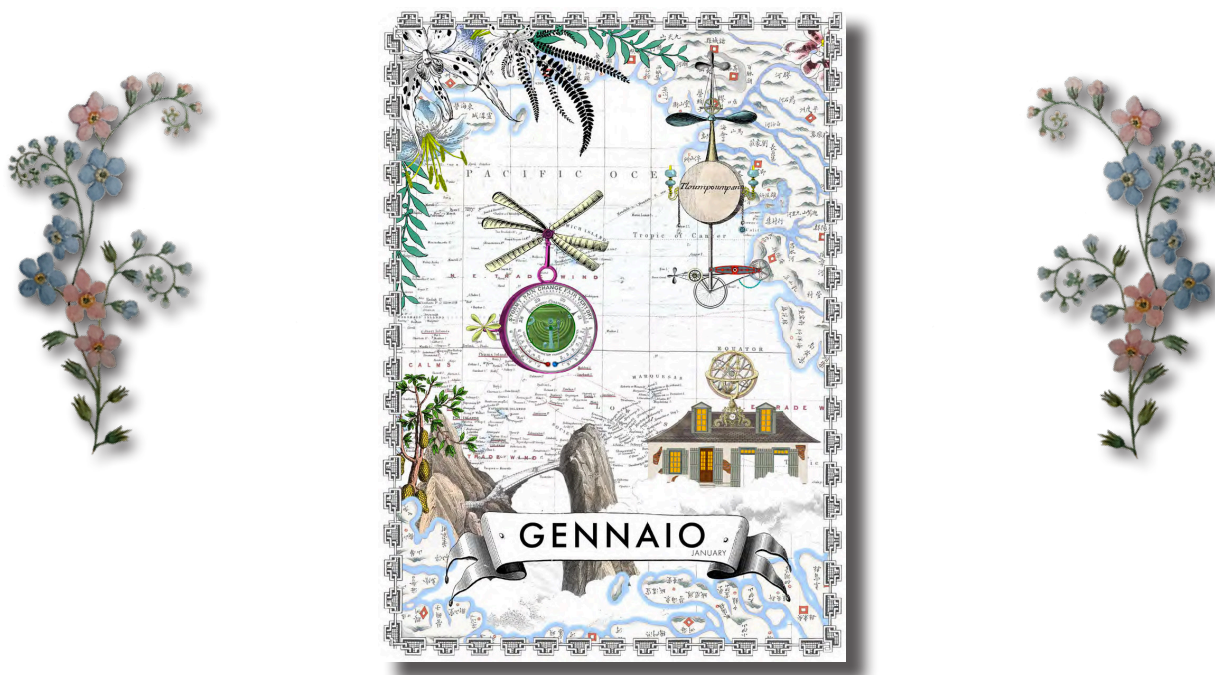
After his birth in Biella, and after classical and legal studies, Poma embarked on a diplomatic career, which led

him to serve, between 1885 and 1907, in various consular posts in Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa.

His professional commitment allowed him to cultivate his cultural passions and indulge his nature as a collector, putting together this spectacular study collection, which in many cases preserves specimens that have remained unique, unknown to newspaper libraries around the world. The visual artist Kristjana S Williams has crafted for us a brightly colored and *fantaisiste* style agenda that seamlessly blends historical elements and the strict setting of the Victorian era with a dreamy, allegorical spirit. Possessing both a narrative and evocative register, her illustrations are simultaneously descriptive and imaginative, didactic and poetic.

The invitation is, therefore, to discover, month after month, some rare items from the *Poma Periodici* collection and the stories they reveal, which will soon be made available to the international scholarly community. As well as to take advantage - as always in our diaries - of the ample white space on each Sunday for one's own reading and travel notes."

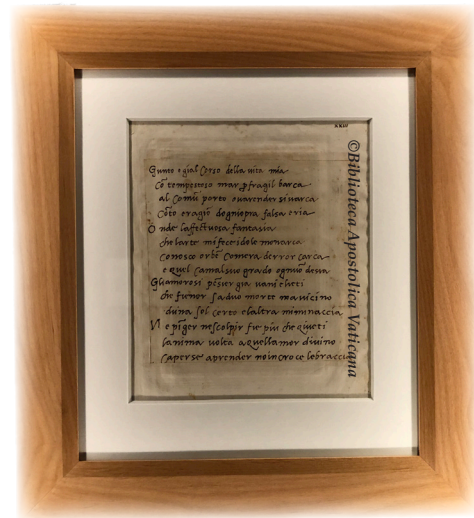
To reserve a copy of the 2025 diary, please contact:  
[books@vatlib.it](mailto:books@vatlib.it)





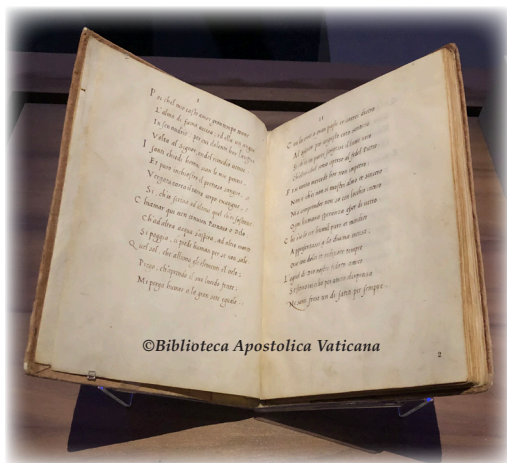
## Michelangelo's mature years celebrated at the British Museum

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1465-1564), sculptor, painter, architect and poet, one of the greatest artists of the Renaissance, left his native Florence for good in 1534 when he was 59, an age considered advanced at the time, to go back to Rome, where he spent the last three decades of his life. In the Eternal City, upon the commission of Clement VII, he painted the *Last Judgment* fresco in the Sistine Chapel (he had painted the vault between 1508 and 1512), and two frescoes with the stories of the first apostles in the Pauline Chapel (Chapel of Saints Peter and Paul), the pontiff's private chapel, commissioned by Paul III. He was also in charge of supervising the building site that was constructing St. Peter's Basilica and was involved in the design of Palazzo Farnese, Porta Pia, Piazza del Campidoglio and the dome of St. Peter's.



"Giunto è già 'l corso della mia vita", c. 1562-1564

Vat. lat. 3211, f. 23r



Vittoria Colonna, marquise of Pescara, 1490-1547

"Rime spirituali"

Vat. lat. 11539, ff. 1v-2r



Sketch for the portrait of Michelangelo

Daniele (Ricciarelli) da Volterra 1509-1566

(Museo Ferrara)

With the exhibition "*Michelangelo, the last decades*," open May 2-July 28, the British Museum sought to celebrate the artist's fruitful and tormented activity during that 30-year period marked by the creation of works in which his sincere and profound Christian faith is manifested through his inner search for the meaning of life and death, the difficulties of advancing age, and is expressed in evocative meditations and touching images, sketched or completed.

It was a difficult age, tormented by the religious schism in Europe, which led to painful, tearing divisions. Martin Luther had been excommunicated in 1521; the Council of Trent (1545-1563) outlined the reform of the Catholic Church in reaction to Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines. Michelangelo's late works are the result of this feverish epoch, with the existential need for a path toward man's true salvation in communion with God.

The initiative offered a series of works illustrating his vast output of that period in the sphere of different art forms, from drawings, paintings, and frescoes to sculpture and architecture, and poetry. The Vatican Library participated in the exhibition with two codices whose contents fit into the context of "poetic meditations," [Vat. lat. 3211](#), containing the artist's autograph *Rime spirituali* (c. 1540), and [Vat. lat. 11539](#), which contains 103 sonnets composed by Vittoria Colonna and given by her to her friend Michelangelo between late 1540 and early 1541. The sonnet that opens this collection highlights the sacrifice of Christ, a theme that was very dear to Buonarroti and would continue to be dominant for him. He also depicted the passion of Jesus in his later works which are more emotional and spiritual than the pictorial works of his youth, which appear more "physical" and "muscular" by comparison.

## The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation in support of manuscript digitization

For several years now, The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation has been supporting the projects of the Vatican Library in many areas of its activities and services, from the restoration of codices to the installation of the Exhibition Hall named after Kirk Kerkorian (1917-2015), from the initiatives promoted in favor of the School of Library Science to the digitization of manuscripts.

To the activity of digitization of the manuscript holdings of the Vatican Library, the most demanding one from the point of view of the human and financial energies it requires, the Foundation dedicates special attention, with the awareness of the importance of the project, both for the preservation of the originals and for the dissemination of this heritage to the world.

Over the years, thanks to the Foundation, which is based in Atlanta, Georgia, it has been possible to make available online for everyone, in different languages, of all periods and provenance, about one-third manuscripts so far processed and belonging to the *Rossiani*, *Urbinati Greci*, *Barberiniani*, *Vaticani Latini* and also Armenian manuscripts collections.

In this issue of OWL we would like to share with our readers images of a very important codex, recently digitized with the support of The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation, the [Borg. ill. 4](#), from the mid-14th century, on which restoration work was carried out by the Laboratory in 1982. The artifact contains the oldest Croatian Glagolitic missal that has come down to us; its ornamentation reveals eastern and western influences.

Having arrived at the Vatican Library in 1902 along with the collection of missionary provenance originally formed from the seventeenth century at the Urban College Library "de Propaganda Fide", this manuscript is part of a set of twenty-three *Illyric* or *Rutheni* documents, eighteen manuscript and five printed, within the *Borgiani* collection. To the College's original collection, the collection that belonged to Cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731-1804), secretary and later prefect of the Congregation "de Propaganda Fide", had been added by bequest, giving its name to the entire collection, comprising some 2,500 manuscript and printed documents, divided according to the languages of the texts.

We are especially grateful to the Foundation for all its commitment to the papal library and its secular mission.

Thanks!





## *Feriae Augusti - Ferragosto - Feast of the Assumption*



Vat. lat. 9236, f. 68r

*Ferragosto* is the holiday celebrated on August 15; in ancient Rome it was the culmination of the *feriae Augusti*, when the end of major agricultural work was celebrated. It is connected with the vacation celebrated at the kalends of August in honor of the god Conso, protector of agriculture; it represented the transition from the cycle of summer rites to that of autumn rites. In imperial times such vacations were renamed *augustals*, hence the present name. On this occasion workers offered their good wishes to their masters, receiving signs of liberality in return. The feasts of *Ferragosto* were in the Christian era made to coincide with the feast of Our Lady, and celebrate the moment of her assumption into heaven, which marks the passage from death to life.

The feast of the Assumption did not entirely replace the traditional pagan festival of renewal of an agricultural cycle with the Christian one of spiritual regenerative significance; sacred rites continued to join profane rites in popular celebrations.

In medieval Rome, the night procession on August 15 was famous, with representatives of the city government, guilds, artisans and commoners participating in large numbers. In 16th- and 17th-century Rome, and even later, the most significant pagan and Christian manifestations of the feast were present.

The institution of the Feast of the Assumption, the oldest and most solemn Marian feast, can be traced back to an apostolic tradition. In the time of St. Theodosius of Palestine (c. 424-529) and St. Ildefonsus of Toledo (607-667), the feast is already mentioned, but the date of August 15 is attested by the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (6th-7th centuries), which records the Mass *Assumptionis Sanctae Mariae*.

From the collection of manuscripts that belonged to Queen Christina of Sweden, the Vatican Library preserves the oldest codex of the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, the "*Vetus Romanum Sacramentarium tripartitum*," with texts for the liturgical celebration of the whole year, [Reg. lat. 316](#), dating from about 725, and made in France, probably in Chelles. It is the most important Merovingian illuminated codex. On f. 153r the reference to the Feast of the Assumption. Its miniatures reveal marked influences of insular art. It is divided, as the title announces, into three parts, with the cycle of the liturgical year from the Nativity to Pentecost (*temporal*); the masses and office that are celebrated in remembrance of the saints (*santoral*); and other prayers (*orationes et preces cum canone per dominicis diebus*).



*Gelasian Sacramentary*, pt. 2 - *Santoral*

*Reg. lat. 316*, ff. 3v-4r

Each part is introduced by a full-page miniature, with a geminated cross inside an aedicule; on the facing page, in the incipit of the section, the symbol of the cross is inserted.



## 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 sails shaking,  
And the grey mist in 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 seagulls 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 trip's over.

John Masefield (1878-1967)





On the afternoon of July 10, we had the pleasure of hosting the well-known Lebanese-born French pianist and composer Omar Harfouch at the Vatican with his family and some guests. Accompanying them was Msgr. Guy-Réal Thivierge, Secretary General of the foundation "Gravissimum educationis," which was established on Oct. 28, 2015 on the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council's declaration, *Gravissimum educationis*, of Oct. 28, 1965.

([https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_it.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_it.html)).

Highly involved in the affairs affecting his troubled home country, youth education and environmental pro-

tection, Omar Harfouch has organized numerous events over the years to support various noble causes.

Master Harfouch, who was already familiar with our Institution, was particularly interested in the images and symbols depicted in the frescoes of the Sistine Library and about the documents related to Lebanon that are preserved in the papal library. At the end of the visit, in which all the guests were very involved, the Maestro expressed his willingness to organize a concert in the Vatican Library. It will be held next November, on the 14th, in the very Sistine Hall of the Library, a concert for peace.

We thank Master Harfouch for his generosity.



*The  
Vatican Apostolic Library  
thanks  
The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation  
and*



*T. Marangoni, "A boat on the high seas"*

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- Frank J. Hanna
- Anthony Mandekic, Eric Esrailian and Lindy Schumacher
- Scott and Lannette Turicchi

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