

Vatican Museums Report

Report Volume LX

Summer 2024

Office of Relations with the Patrons
of the Arts in the Vatican Museums



From the Director of the Vatican Museums

DR. BARBARA JATTA

Another year has passed with your unwavering support and enthusiasm. It seems that every year, the bonds that unite us as a community grow ever stronger.

In just the first half of this year, the Vatican Museums have already started many new initiatives.

Prof. Antonio Paolucci, my esteemed and beloved predecessor (2007-2016), sadly passed away on February 4, 2024. An event in his honor was organized in the Raphael Hall of the Pinacoteca on March 14, 2024. It was a moment of recognition to celebrate this extraordinary man who dedicated his entire life to the service of art and the dissemination and protection of the historic artistic heritage. He always acted with a passion and competence rarely seen in his nine years of service to the Vatican Museums.

We have hosted numerous "Museum Thursdays," such as programs on the obelisk of Domitian, precious relics of the tunic of St. Peter and the dalmatic of St. John that came from the Papal Chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum, and an event entitled: "Contemporanea 50. The Modern and Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums 1973-2023. Origins, history, transformations."

Now a tradition, Room XVII of the Pinacoteca hosted various exhibition initiatives to show the "behind the scenes" activities of the Vatican Museums. On January 31, 2024, we inaugurated the exhibition on a piece of embroidery about the historical figure of Matilda of Canossa. Subsequently, on March 20, 2024, the exhibition of the Forty-Hour Decorative Stand opened. And then, again, on June 25, 2024, Room XVII hosted an exhibition on the very precious Reliquary of Montalto delle Marche, from Pope Sixtus V.

This year also marked the beginning of activities hosted by the Museums in the Castel Gandolfo Palace. In the new museum spaces, a photographic exhibition with a historical-documentary slant on the welcoming refugees in the palace during the year 1944 the time of the Second World War was created. On the occasion of the Easter solemnities, two important works from the papal collections were exhibited: the painting of Christ the Redeemer by Correggio and the Raphaellesque tapestry



of the Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Additionally, for several months our Museums have been preparing for the great Jubilee 2025 that the Holy Father will inaugurate on December 24, 2024. In anticipation of this great event, the opening hours of the Museums have been extended and new rules have been introduced for an improved and safer experience of our artistic heritage.

Thanks to your generous support and enthusiasm, we at the Vatican Museums have been able to carry out many conservation and restoration projects this year. We always look forward to seeing you in the Museums and sharing our projects with you. In particular, it was a great pleasure to welcome the Italian and International Chapter in April and the Belgian Chapter in May.

A heartfelt thank you to all of you for your visits to the Museums and the meetings held in your countries. I send you all and your families my most sincere wishes for peace, health and serenity.

From the Coordinator of the Office of Relations with the Patrons of the Arts

MONSIGNOR TERENCE HOGAN

My dear Patrons and Friends,

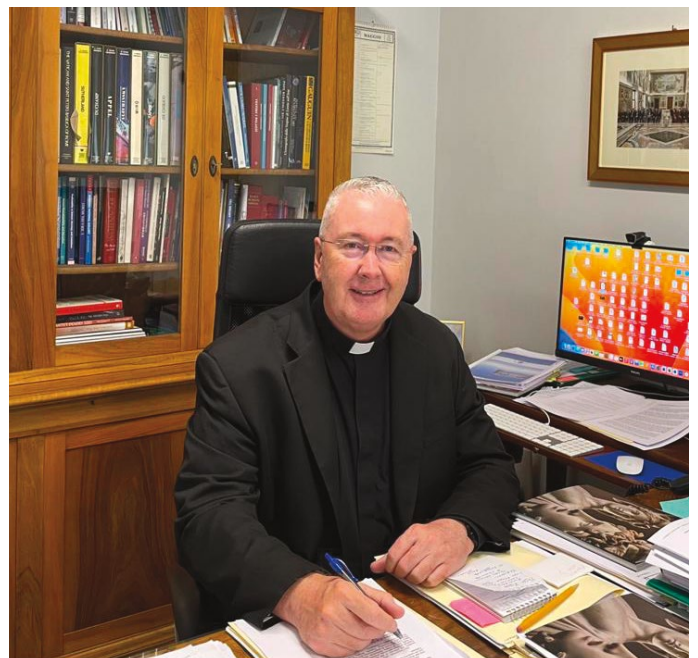
I am delighted to send you warm greetings from the Office of Relations with the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums (ORPAVM). It is truly amazing to realize all that has been accomplished by you, our beloved Patrons, over the last forty-one years since our founding in 1983. In this Summer 2024 newsletter, we highlight a number of recent projects that have been completed, such as the **Ciborium Monument of Saint John Lateran**, the **Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints**, a **Relief with Prometheus** and the **Crucifixion**. We also share with you updates on our ongoing restoration projects and also news about the exhibit entitled: **Art that Unites: A Dialogue between the Vatican and Thrivent** that took place in Minneapolis this Spring. We continue highlighting the Vatican Museums' activities at the awe-inspiring **Apostolic Palace** at Castel Gandolfo. As many of you know, the *Palazzo Pontificio* is truly a place of history, contemplation, and art that houses centuries of memories of the various popes who resided there. Patrons are now able to enjoy special guided visits to Castel Gandolfo that include secret rooms inside the Apostolic Palace, the Observatory, and the *Antiquarium* Museum, which contains classical pieces of notable archaeological significance.

Of course, we can never say enough about the superb work of our curators and restorers whose handiwork is found throughout the Vatican Museums and whose daily commitment and dedication ensure that the artistic and cultural heritage open to the world continues to be conserved.

Since our joyous 40th Anniversary celebrations in November 2023, we have had the opportunity to welcome numerous Patrons from every corner of the world, and our guides and Vatican staff make every effort to warmly welcome them! I wish to commend all of them for their many hours of

dedicated service. As you may know, our colleague **Lindy Nieuwpoort** and her husband welcomed a newborn this past May. Additionally, the Patrons' Office has welcomed **Carlo Verdecchia**, who is collaborating with our donors and Chapter Leaders, as well as **Elizabeth Hale**, from Michigan, who is interning with us during the summer before she returns to the University of Notre Dame.

I have had the special privilege of visiting a number of our Patron Chapters in the US and continue to meet them during their visit to the Vatican. As we look forward to the coming worldwide 2025 Jubilee Year –a time dedicated to pilgrimage, faith, hope and mercy– we will continue to pray and support one another in our unique mission. May God bless each of you and thank you for your ongoing commitment and generosity.



Thanks to Your Commitment

THESE PROJECTS ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN EVER

Ciborium Monument of St. John Lateran

ILLINOIS CHAPTER

The ciborium above the front altar at St. John Lateran was built at the time of Pope Urban V (1362-1370) as part of a redevelopment plan for the papal basilica. In ecclesiastical architecture, a ciborium, commonly referred to as a baldachin, (“ciborion”: κιβώριον in Greek) is a canopy that covers the altar in a church. The ciborium in St. John Lateran was intended to display the heads of Saints Peter and Paul. The interior of the ciborium contains valuable paintings dated to the late 16th century. The interior lunettes depict the Delivery of the Keys, the Conversion of Saul, the Crucifixion of St. Peter, and the Beheading of St. Paul. The restoration procedures have been carried out by the Restoration Company “Studio C.R.C.,” owned by **Paolo**



Pastorello and coordinated under the supervision of Master **Paolo Violini**. The restoration's completion is due to an in-depth campaign of preliminary investigations undertaken by the Scientific Research Laboratory of the Vatican Museums.

Crucifixion

OHIO CHAPTER

This extraordinary painting, attributed to Luca di Tommé, shows the tragic scene of the Crucifixion with refinement and precious colours. The meditative postures of both the Madonna and Saint John are juxtaposed to the momentum in the figures of Longinus and the Centurion, while groups of armed men argue among themselves. The panel probably belongs to the center of the predella with Stories of St. Thomas, now in the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh. The restoration has been an opportunity for an in-depth study by restorers **Emilia Rizza** with the supervision of Master **Francesca Persegati** and **Fabio Piacentini**. For the wooden support, **Massimo Alesi** and **Marco De Pillis** disassembled the cross beams and non-original stain, they worked on crack remediation and consolidation, and removed the non-original wood elements. To restore the pictorial side, the Painting

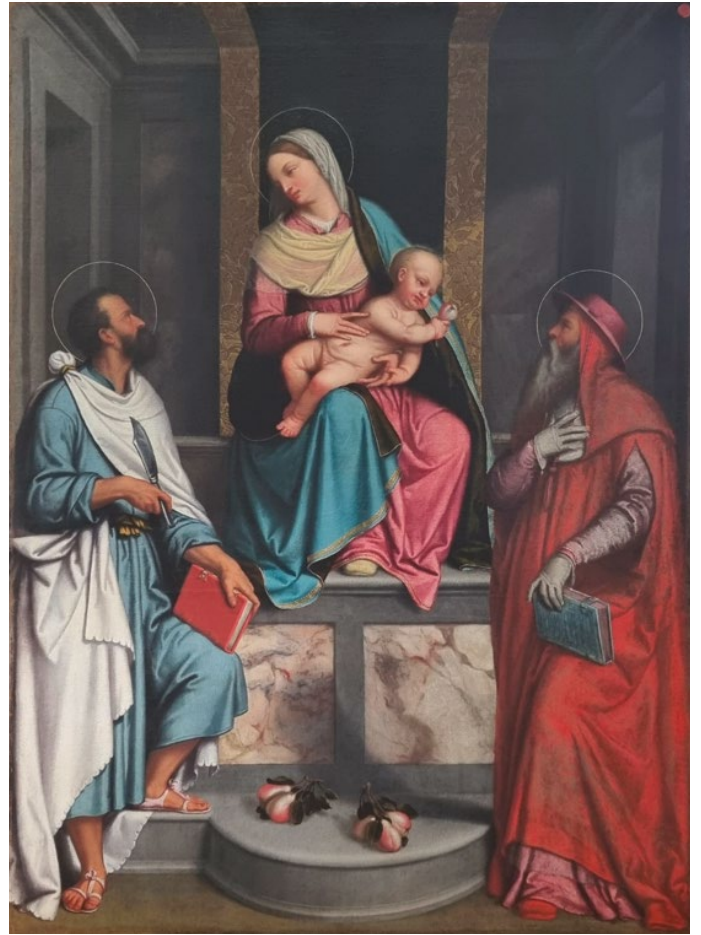


Restoration Laboratory carried out a consolidation and protective glazing, as well as cleaning, plastering, reintegration, and painting.

Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER – Michael and Janet Feeley

This oil on canvas altarpiece, known as the “Madonna of the Pears,” is a masterpiece by the painter Alessandro Bonvicino, or “Moretto” (Brescia 1498-1554). The work depicts an enthroned Madonna and Child between Saints Bartolomeo and Jerome, surrounded by pears at the base of the throne and in the hand of the Infant Jesus. Ancient Greeks and Romans believed pears to be sacred because of their association with the goddesses of love and fertility. Restoration efforts have included the construction of a new expansion frame, disassembly of the painting from the old fixed frame, and the smoothing of deformations caused by humidity and pressure cycles. The project also required the removal of oxidised varnishes, retouches by special solvent mixtures, filling of gaps, and pictorial reintegration. Restorer **Alessandra Zarelli** worked on restoring paint colors, while her colleagues **Stefano Tombesi**, **Massimo Alesi**, and **Marco De Pillis** worked on the wood aspects. Analyses by the Scientific Research Laboratory included: induced ultraviolet fluorescence, infrared in false colors, infrared reflectography, X-ray imaging, and XRF mapping.



Relief with Prometheus

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

This relief depicts the pagan myth of Prometheus and the creation of humankind. It retells the story found originally in Plato's Protagoras. In the myth the titan Prometheus, depicted seated with a beard on the far right, stole fire from the gods to give to humanity. In the Western psyche, he is a symbol for human ingenuity and is seen as the author of the human arts and sciences. The relief was found in Ostia, about 4 miles outside of Rome. It entered the papal collections during the pontificate of Pope Pius VI and was held inside the Room of the Busts of the Museo Pio Clementino. The Stone Restoration Laboratory, coordinated by Master **Guy Devreux** and restorer **Valentina Felici**, carried out the restoration of this marble. Following an initial diagnostic intervention, the restorer proceeded with the cleaning tests, first with



a brush dusting to remove the dust deposits that had accumulated. Then, restorers used a laser to achieve more surface legibility through a homogenous removal of debris.

Ongoing Restorations

THESE PROJECTS WILL BE COMPLETED SOON

The Mocking of Christ

NORTHWEST CHAPTER – Rick and Lisa Altig

The Vatican Museums acquired *The Mocking of Christ* in 1909. We are fortunate to have this painting, as the scene is an extraordinary rendering of one of the most dramatic episodes of the Passion of Christ. According to the canonical gospels of the New Testament, this episode in Jesus' Passion occurred after Christ's trial and before his crucifixion. The work itself is most likely from the workshop of the great Renaissance painter Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (Vercelli 1477 – Siena 1549), known in modern times by his nickname, "Il Sodoma." The cracks on the painting can be attributed to the two first cross beams, which



are no longer functional. The restorers inserted the cross beams into channels with dovetail profiles. After vailing the painting with Japanese paper, restorers began the conservation processes by gluing wedge-shaped inserts made of poplar wood. The two cross beams were removed, straightened, and repositioned with Teflon bonding along all points of contact, reducing the amount of friction between the wood. The restoration is still ongoing under the supervision of curator Dr. **Fabrizio Biferali** and restorers **Laura Baldelli**, **Massimo Alesi**, **Marco De Pillis**, **Stefano Tombesi**.



Triptych with Crucifixion and Saints

NEW YORK CHAPTER

Niccolò di Liberatore painted this splendid triptych for the Valenti Chapel in San Venanzio in the town of Camerino, Marche. The intense naturalism and pathos of the composition recalls the manner of Carlo Crivelli and betrays Nordic influences. The landscape in the background, extraordinarily realistic, shows Liberatore's familiarity with the artist Perugino. The painting is a complex structure of considerable size—one of the biggest and most articulated in the Vatican Pinacoteca. In November 2023, the involved process of restoration began by moving the painting from the Pinacoteca to the Restoration Laboratories. This required disassembling the entire piece. After careful observation, restorers **Laura Baldelli**, **Angela Cerreta**, and **Chiara Notarstefano** bandaged the work where the paint film had lifted from the frame. Individual disassembled parts were placed in plastic bags to receive an anoxic treatment. The wooden frame was restored due to the work of **Stefano Tombesi**, **Massimo Alesi**, and **Marco De Pillis**.

Mattathias' Wrath against the Idolater

CANADA CHAPTER: Henry and Sharon Van Der Sloot, Gary and Joan McEwan, Jerry Quinn, Tom and Debra Mauro

Under the supervision of curator Dr. **Alessandra Rodolfo**, and Painting Restoration Master **Francesca Persegati**, the restorer **Francesca Cencia** began the restoration by cleaning the pictorial film and removing deposits and varnishes from previous restoration efforts. She then plastered the gaps and the pictorial reintegrations. **Massimo Alesi** and **Marco De Pillis** restored the back of the canvas and the wooden frame. Before starting the cleaning tests, the photographers in the Photographic Laboratory carried out a meticulous photographic campaign to document the work. Dr. **Fabio Morresi**, Dr. **Fabio Luciano Castro**, and Dr. **Donato Quarta** from the Scientific Research Laboratory carried out a non-invasive



examination. Studies are still ongoing, and we hope to enjoy this unique painting in all its beauty as soon as possible.

Fourteen statues in the Atrium of Quattro Cancelli

FLORIDA CHAPTER

Italian Architect Giuseppe Camporese (Roma 1761–1822) belonged to a well known family of architects that was very active in the Papal States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1786 Camporese created 12 sculptures and two sarcophagi for the niches that animate the façade of the Atrium of the Four Gates (Quattro Cancelli) inside the Vatican Museums. These statues, at the base of the Simonetti Staircase, lead to the upper galleries of the Museums. The sculptures are athletic figures, and the sarcophagi depict facing griffons and clipeophorus erotes. After the statues were transferred from the Atrium of the Quattro Cancelli to the Stone Restoration Laboratory, restorers began the necessary restoration procedures: cleaning of the surfaces, removal of the previous restorations considered unsuitable, and—where necessary—partial disassembly of some various elements. Under the supervision of Master **Guy Devreux**, restorers **Kristian Schneider**, **Giuseppe Ciraolo**, **Anita Negri**, and **Giulia Toppa** (members of the Restoration Consortium Kavaklik) are continuing their important and difficult work.



Chapter Visits

SPRING 2024

The 2024 spring began with the visits of our Patrons from the Italian and International Chapter on April 12 and the Belgian Chapter on May 13-17. During both the events, Patrons had the opportunity to visit and explore new venues within the Vatican territories.

The Italian & International Patrons reached the stunning Etruscan Terrace, one of the most enchanting vistas in the Eternal City! This sunset view was followed by cocktails in the "Sala Guglielmi" of the Etruscan Museum. During their stay in Rome and the Vatican, the Belgium Chapter had the unique opportunity to visit the fascinating Matisse Room, which is part of the Contemporary Art Collection where the restorers were still at work on Matisse's preparatory sketches. The Belgium Chapter visit ended with a farewell Gala dinner in one of the beautiful rooms of the Vatican Pinacoteca. The Office of Relations with the Patrons of the Arts thanks all the Patrons who made these Chapter visits so special!



Belgium Chapter Patrons



From left to right: Amy Gallant Sullivan, Sabrina Zappia (IT & Int), Barbara Jatta and Mons. Terence Hogan in the Etruscan Museum



Nicoletta Romanoff Consolo, Caterina Balivo e Fatemah Fahad al Ebrahim



Italian and International Chapter Patrons in the Sistine Chapel



Belgium Chapter Patrons and ORPAVM staff on the Vatican Museums Pinacoteca Terrace

Art That Unites

APRIL - JUNE, 2024

This past summer, the Vatican Museums had the opportunity to partner with the Thrivent Art Collection out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. From April 22, 2024 to June 25, 2024, Thrivent hosted an exhibit entitled: "Art That Unites: A Dialogue between the Centuries from the Vatican Museums and Thrivent Art Collection." The exhibit has been curated by Joanna Reiling Lindell, Director and Curator of the Thrivent Collection of Religious Art and Corporate Art Collection, and Francesca Boschetti, Assistant Curator of the Modern and Contemporary Art Collection of Vatican Museums.



Similarly to the mission of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, Thrivent takes seriously the responsibility to preserve and share art of all kinds. It



Johan Van Parys, Francesca Boschetti, Sister Raffaella Petrini F.S.E., Joanna Reiling Lindell and Teresa J. Rasmussen, President and Chief Executive Officer of Thrivent

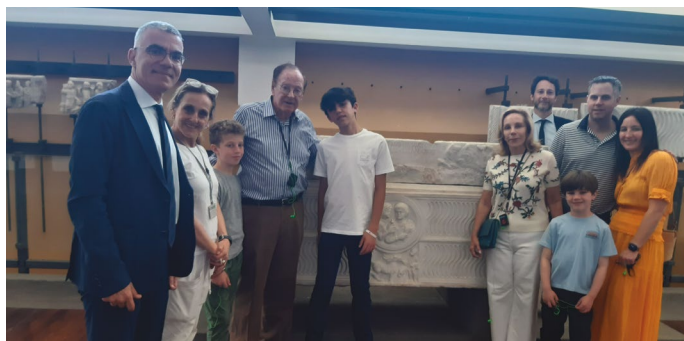
is because of this affinity that Thrivent and the Patrons have enjoyed a long-standing and fruitful partnership, which most recently brought about the "Art That Unites" exhibition. The Vatican Museums loaned 27 pieces to Thrivent for the duration of the exhibit, marking the first time that these works have visited the United States. The exhibit featured pieces from the 16th century to the modern era, and it was organized according to subject matter, such as "The Life of Jesus," "Prayer," and "The Apocalypse." The exhibit explored the way in which Christians made art throughout history and how artists reach across time to speak to one another.



The items on loan from the Vatican came from the Museums' Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art, which was initiated by Pope Paul VI in 1973. The works on loan have now been returned to the Vatican Museums and are available for viewing in the Borgia Apartments.

Patrons in the Vatican

OUR DAILY VISITS



From left: Dr. Umberto Utro, restorer Valentina Lini, with Bruce Toll and Family (FL) in the Pius Christian Museum



Chris and Kathy Murphy (FL) with Msgr. Hogan



Msgr. Hogan, Arlene and Joseph Ferrara (IL)



Msgr. Hogan, Stephanie and Andy Nguyen with Eames (GA)



From left: Dennis Cremin, Mary and Ed Hall, Rebecca Cremin (CA) in the Painting Restoration Laboratory



Linda and Roger Chaix (CA) at the Basilica of Saint Mary Major



Msgr. Hogan with Janet and Michael Feeley (CA)



From left: Annarita Imperio, John Foster, Rosalind Collinson Jones (FL), Martina Suozzo, Chiara Lorenzetti, Sara Savoldello and Carlo Verdecchia

Castel Gandolfo 1944

On February 10, 2024 the Apostolic Palace at Castel Gandolfo opened to the public its exhibit, *Castel Gandolfo 1944*. This timely exhibit commemorates the period during which the papal residence became a refugee camp for Italians and others displaced by the war. The multimedia display provides a unique look into the daily life of refugees housed in the hallways, stairwells, and grounds of Castel Gandolfo. It explores the joys, sorrows, comforts, and pains of an evacuee at the papal residence. During the Second World War, Pope Pius XII heard of the plight of the tens of thousands of people made homeless, by the fierce fighting near his summer palace at Castel Gandolfo. Confined within the walls of Vatican City and unable to visit the residence himself, the Holy Father opened the palace doors to anyone displaced by the war. Over 12,000 refugees and evacuees fled to Castel Gandolfo seeking shelter. Tragically, though, the residence-turned-refugee-camp was bombed on four separate occasions because of its proximity to the German front. The exhibit features photographs, historic footage, interviews with survivors, and objects from the time period. It is meant to commemorate the victims of



this tragic bombing, and also to honor the Vatican for its care of the displaced and refugees. The Carlson Estate, of the New York Chapter, helped to sponsor this incredible illustration of life as a refugee in a papal villa. As Patrons, you may enjoy a guided tour of the Apostolic Palace, the Antiquarium, the Secret Garden, the Observatory (Specola Vaticana), and this newest exhibit upon your next trip to Castel Gandolfo.

Terry and Mary Murphy (FL) visiting the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo “...touring Castel Gondolfo truly surpassed all our expectations. Situated on a hilltop next to a sparkling lake, the summer residence of the Pope features a spectacular distant view of Rome from the terrace.”

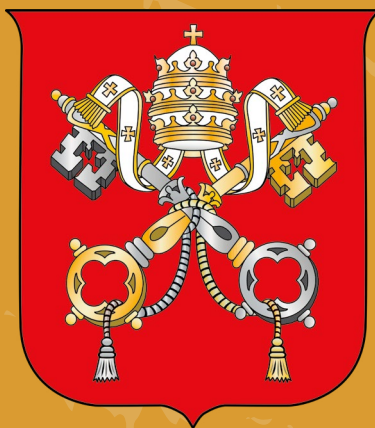


2025 Jubilee Year

Rome today is filled with reminders of the upcoming Jubilee Year 2025. From streets being newly paved to buildings covered in scaffolding, it is estimated that over 35 million pilgrims will come to the Eternal City to mark the occasion. The theme for this Jubilee is “Pilgrims of Hope.” With its ancient roots in O.T. Judaism, the regular practice of celebrating Holy Years in the Catholic Church began in the year 1300 when Pope Boniface VIII issued a Papal Bull that established a recurring jubilee (from the Hebrew “jobel” or ram’s horn). During the Jubilee Year, faithful from all over the world make a pilgrimage to Rome in order to walk through the Holy Doors of the four basilicas—St. Peter, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, or St. Mary Major—to receive a plenary indulgence. Through the centuries, the Jubilee is linked theologically as well as historically and spiritually, to the act of pilgrimage, penance and



reparation. Christ himself made his own pilgrimage on earth, and in doing so he brought eternity into the bounds of time. The Jubilee of 1300 established Rome as another Jerusalem whereby the faithful would journey, like Christ, to cross the boundary of death into eternity. The Holy Door symbolizes the path to eternal life by the crossing of its threshold. Therefore, the jubilant pilgrimage to Rome is a means by which we may participate, in a unique way, in Christ’s life and, above all, his divine mercy.



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