



Michigan Chapter
Patrons of the Arts in
the Vatican Museums

LAST YEAR'S
ADVENT DINNER



(L-R) Rev. Canon Michael Stein
(Pastor, Detroit St. Joseph
Oratory), Mr. John Hale
(Co-Chair, PAVM-MI) and
Dr. Salvador Salort-Pons
(Director, The Detroit
Institute of Arts)



FALL 2019

A SPECIAL INVITATION
Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums
Advent Dinner



You and your guests are invited to reserve **Tuesday, December 10, 2019** on your holiday calendar, and to purchase tickets for the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums – Michigan Chapter's (PAVM-MI) annual **Advent Dinner**. Being held this year at the beautiful Bloomfield Hills Country Club (350 W. Long Lake Rd), tickets are \$150 per person. Cocktails will be served at 6:30pm, followed by an Italian-themed dinner (with choice of entrees) at 7:30pm. This festive holiday event is black-tie preferred.

Our evening of fellowship will begin in the Stone Chapel of St. Hugo of the Hills (2215 Opdyke Rd. – Bloomfield Hills) at 5:30pm.

Fr. J.J. Mech, Chaplain for PAVM-MI, will celebrate Holy Mass for all guests prior to cocktails and dinner at the Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

This year's after-dinner speaker will be The Detroit Institute of Arts Conservation Imaging Specialist, Mr. Aaron Steele and DIA Painting Conservator, Ms. Ellen Hanspach-Bernal. Their presentation will focus on one of the museum's most famous paintings, *"The Wedding Dance"* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. This iconic painting was acquired by the museum in 1930 and is the subject of the DIA's upcoming special exhibition ***Bruegel's "The Wedding Dance" Revealed***, December 14, 2019 – August 30, 2020.

ADVENT DINNER EVENT: RSVP BY NOVEMBER 26

For more information and how to purchase/make your reservations, please contact Eileen Dluzynski at edluzynski@ctscentral.net or 313-565-8888 ext. 4174

This is a great opportunity for current PAVM-MI members to invite friends and family as guests to enjoy a beautiful evening together and learn more about the good work of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums.

Coming Home from Rome

If you've had the chance to tour the Vatican Museum's Carriage Pavilion in Rome, you may remember the stately 1929 Graham Paige – Type 837 papal vehicle on display. Why might this vehicle stand out among all the others in the exhibition? Because of its very important role as part of the collection, and its significance in papal transportation history. This was the first Popemobile to be used by a sitting Pontiff, Pope Pius XI.

In 1929, brothers Joseph B., Robert C. and Ray A. Graham gifted the vehicle to the Holy See to mark the historical Conciliation between the Church and the Italian State. Noting that other vehicles were donated for use by earlier popes, the Graham Paige was donated post-Lateran Pact and more respectfully equipped for use by the Vicar of Christ. The rear passenger compartment was specially built with a "throne-like" seat that was elegantly reserved for one single rider.

This Graham Paige vehicle was used exclusively by both Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII. The coat of arms of both pontiffs can still be seen on the doors. One trip to note was that of Pope Pius XI on December 22, 1929. This trip marks the

first time a pope left the Vatican in 59 years, since the taking of Rome in 1870. The occasion was the celebration of Pope Pius XI's priestly ordination and to visit the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano (Basilica of St. John Lateran).

Interestingly, the Graham Paige is not a European car. This car was built in Detroit, MI complete with a wooden chassis that has deteriorated over these

"We have to bring her back to life."

ROMINA COMETTI

Restoration Projects Manager for the Rome Office of the International Vatican Patrons

past 90 years. The priceless Popemobile is in dire need of restoration by experts who have flawlessly restored Graham Paige vehicles in the past. In addition to the chassis, the papal compartment and single passenger seat, the leather interior and dashboard, as well as a seriously seized engine, all require significant attention so as to restore the car to its original, drivable condition.

"We have to bring her back to life", said Romina Cometti, Restoration Projects Manager for the Rome Office of the International Vatican Patrons. "Maybe

Pope Francis will take it out for a spin – it has not been driven since 1940 or 1945." The PAVM-Michigan Chapter has agreed to the restoration that will be performed in the United States.

To learn more about this type of restoration project, several members of the PAVM-MI board of directors and Fr. Kevin Lixey, International Executive Director of the PAVM, traveled to Elkhart, IN to visit PAVM member and business owner/car collector, Jack Boyd Smith, Jr. and to tour LaVine Restorations, Inc. Upon entering the restoration garage, there sat a Packard 12 vehicle in the process of being restored. Owner, Eric LaVine, gave the group a working overview of the Packard

12 restoration and explained what it takes to restore a classic antique car from the ground up. Before any work can begin on a vehicle, there needs to be research and lots of it. Son, Travis LaVine, shared that some cars in their shop require hours and hours of research and he's the man who does it. At the end of the LaVine visit, Jack Smith invited the group back to his private museum for a personal educational tour of his rare classic car collection. Jack refers to his collection as the "rolling arts" because his cars don't just sit in the museum, he drives them for all to appreciate.



(L-R) Jack Boyd Smith, Jr. (Owner, JBS Collection and PAVM member) and Eric LaVine (Owner/Founder, LaVine Restorations, Inc.)



Restoration garage at LaVine Restorations, Inc. (L-R) Front Row: Jeanne Stevenson, Fr. Kevin Lixey, Andrew Hale, Suzanne and Tony Rea. Back Row: Jack Boyd Smith Jr., Dale Chiara, John Hale, Kathleen Crombie, Viviane and Eric LaVine, and Mark Neapolitano.

The Graham Paige

THE FIRST POPEMOBILE TO BE USED BY A PONTIFF



"This (restoration) is a bit new for the Vatican Museums, as well as to outsource a restoration outside their own restoration labs. So it will be a new experience for all."

DALE CHIARA

PAVM Michigan Chapter Board Member

On October 13, 2019, Romina Cometti, visited The Detroit Institute of Arts to give an updated presentation on the Graham Paige restoration. Romina confirmed that LaVine Restorations has been chosen to restore the vehicle. Supporting the Rome PAVM decision, Suzanne Rea, PAVM-MI Co-Chair and board member, shared "... I am confident that the restoration of the Graham Paige by LaVine will be a true testament to its amazing history and be a very prominent part of the Carriage Museum in the Vatican. The restoration of the Graham Paige is in good hands."

Romina pointed out that this restoration is the first of the collection to be restored outside of the Vatican – another historic piece of this project. The limousine will be shipped to the United States in late spring/early summer 2020,

and every step will be supervised by a Vatican curator. The projected restoration is 14 months, which means it will be ready to ship back to the Vatican in 2022. But before the vehicle leaves US soil, there will be a limited exhibition tour of the vehicle, to specific museums, that have already expressed interest. PAVM-MI members can also expect to hear about more exciting opportunities to see the project at various times towards completion.



(Top photo) *Graham Paige 837 in the Vatican Museum Carriage Pavilion. (L-R) Dr. Sandro Barbagilo (Chief Restorer, Vatican Museums), Kristan and John Hale.*

(Bottom photo) *Romina Cometti, Rome PAVM Restoration Projects Manager, at The Detroit Institute of Arts with an update on the Graham Paige 837 restoration plans.*

"These historical cars are a treasure and the individuals who restore them are true artists."

MARK NAPOLITANO

PAVM Michigan Chapter Board Member

The Sam and Nada Foundation Underwrites



The Graham Paige Restoration

Nada and Sam Simon first heard about PAVM-MI from Suzanne Rea about eight years ago and became members to

support the arts in the Vatican. They recently traveled with the Patrons to Rome and the Vatican on the Patrons biannual visit in September. While speaking with Fr. Kevin Lixey, LC, the International Director of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, they first

learned about the Michigan Chapter's commitment to funding the restoration of the first automobile ever used by a pope.

When Nada and Sam saw the limousine in person, a 1929 Graham-Paige 837 vehicle in the Vatican Museum's Carriage Pavilion, they fell in love with it. How amazing it was for them to see this first Popemobile surrounded by all the other vehicles used by Pontiffs in times past. Nada said, "It was just magical."

Nada and Sam, both Iraqi immigrants, are grateful to God for all His many

blessings and their life in the United States. The Sam and Nada Simon Foundation was created to give back to the community in the country they love. Nada shared that she and her husband believe, "This country is a gift you just can't take for

granted ... we are so grateful to this great country."

So when the opportunity arose to fund the restoration of this significant Popemobile made in Detroit, the fact that they own an energy company in Michigan, and

have a deep Catholic faith, Nada said, "It just made sense."

Asked if they had previously visited the Vatican, Nada shared this amazing story. The Vatican has a special meaning for the couple. Not only because of their Catholic roots, but also because of their 1999 trip to Rome in which Nada prayed for a special intention.

That silent, special intention was for a child to

be born. Nada prayed to St. Peter, in St. Peter's Basilica, that if he would intercede and God blessed her with a son, she would name him Peter. In time, Nada's prayer was answered and she became pregnant. This story should remind us all that God is never outdone in generosity. Not only was she pregnant, but the couple was expecting twins ... two boys!

But this is not the end of the story. Sam had a great devotion to St. Michael the Archangel and decided that he would name his first-born son Michael. Sharing this with Nada, and not knowing of her prayer/promise to St. Peter, he said, "Let's name our second son Peter." How do you say thank you to God for such gifts? Nada and Sam Simon believe and live by this motto: "When you are blessed, you need to bless others."

PAVM-Michigan is thankful to the Sam and Nada Foundation for underwriting the restoration of the Graham-Paige project. May God bless the Simon family as they continue to bless others that God places in their path.



(L-R) Peter, Sam, Nada and Michael Simon

*"When you are blessed,
you need to bless others."*

NADA AND SAM SIMON

Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel: THE EXHIBITION



High above the floor of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel are those familiar and famous

frescoes depicting the genius of Michelangelo. It would be difficult, no doubt, to get a closer look at his masterful brush strokes and bask in the color and scale of each scene. But LA.-based exhibition company **SEE Global Entertainment** (which acquired the rights to the fresco reproductions through an exclusive worldwide license from Bridgeman Images), has found a way to showcase 34 museum-quality, near-life-size reproductions of Michelangelo's frescos in "**Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel: The Exhibition.**"

This highly-acclaimed, traveling exhibition is currently installed, through January 11, 2020, in the Los Angeles, CA Christ Cathedral's Cultural Center. Anna and John Paul Andree (PAVM-CA) toured the Sistine Chapel on their honeymoon (2016) and recently visited the current exhibition in LA.

Noting that scale is an important aspect of art in general, Anna shared, "Getting to see each painting up close with the backstory included, provided a beautiful flow to the piece I had never before appreciated. This also allowed me to appreciate the movement and expression in each individual painting that is missed seeing it from far away. When I look at the art as a whole now,

it is more vivid and alive compared to the first time seeing it."

When asked about any new insights on the frescoes, John Paul shared, "... there is far more allegorical and theological detail packed into every fresco than I had ever given Michelangelo credit for. The audio guides do an excellent job of explaining these. The size of the exhibits invites you to study each from the perspective of Michelangelo himself would have viewed them – only four to six feet away, compared to 40 to 60 as usually seen."

Asked if there was anything in particular the couple wanted our members to know, Anna said, "While seeing the chapel in person is definitely something that should be on everyone's bucket list, it's tough to really see and understand every story and nuance until it's broken down painting by painting. Giving the viewer an up close appreciation for the details and backstory of each painting is the true beauty of this exhibit."

John Paul went on to say, "I am far more inspired and appreciative of the Sistine and Michelangelo's work because of this exhibit and greatly encourage the trip. Yes, just down the road is Disneyland where you can feed your inner child (and a churro), but this feeds your soul."

For more information and to purchase tickets for the Los Angeles exhibition, go to: www.sistineexhibit.com



Patrons Rome and Vatican



The 2019 PAVM-MI biannual trip to Rome was September 2-8, 2019. The visit included several exclusive venues for the Patron travelers, including a private Mass celebrated by the President of the Vatican, Cardinal Bertello. Dr. Elizabeth Lev guided Patrons and their guests on a private after-hours visit of the Sistine Chapel, followed by a beautiful candlelight dinner in the museums. The Director of the Vatican Museums, Dr. Barbara Jatta, greeted the Patrons with an informative update on recent museum achievements. In addition, US Ambassador Callista Gingrich, welcomed the Patrons to the American Embassy to the Holy See for a special reception.

Fr. Denis Theroux, Pastor of Our Lady of Victory in Northville, MI, is a new member of PAVM-MI and participated in his first

trip as a Patron. "I've long appreciated the arts", he said, "in fact it has always been something that has attracted me to the Church. When John Hale invited me, and explained what the trip would entail and how it was run, it immediately peaked my interest and my desire to return to Rome – but more importantly, to be with a group of people who appreciate the treasures, the gifts, of art and music through the eyes of the Catholic Church. I would go again. It's a great way to not only experience faith, but to learn about our faith and the history of it."

Fr. Theroux went on to say, "The restoration labs were the highlight. The most spiritually powerful were the Holy Stairs, Scala Santa. With my Multiple Sclerosis, I never imagined I would be able to mount the steps on my knees, but felt very moved to do so and was able.

I felt overwhelmed by the experience of recognizing that I was kneeling in perhaps the very place that Jesus had walked. Another highlight was saying Mass in the Chapel of Pius X. To celebrate Mass over his tomb was a powerful and wonderful experience."

Sue Woodsum, a PAVM-MI member since 2017, has been to Rome and the Vatican several times in the past on Corporate Travel Services pilgrimages, of which one was a PAVM-MI trip. Sue says, "I love Rome and am very moved by its history and the feelings of spirituality while there. It should be on the top of everyone's bucket list."

"The priest (Fr. Denis Theroux) from my local church decided to go and invited other parishioners to attend", Sue shared. "Watching the faces of awe, joy, happiness and tears as my fellow church members experienced Rome for the first time, and having Fr. Denis say Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, was incredible for all of us."

The next PAVM-MI trip to Rome and the Vatican Museums will take place in 2021. Sue Woodsum added, "If you have the opportunity and the means, definitely GO!"



(L-R) Mr. Newt Gingrich, Sr. Joseph Andrew Bogdanowicz O.P., Mrs. Sue Woodsum, Mother Assumpta Long O.P., and Ambassador Callista Gingrich

"The personalized care and details make this (a PAVM-MI) trip so special: the daily Masses in incredible churches, the knowledgeable guides that are patient and give so much information, the companionship of the group, and all the amazing meals in fabulous places."

SUE WOODSUM

Trip 2019



*"Without the Patrons,
much of the art would have
been destroyed or fallen to
ruin. This is our gift
to future generations
to learn about their faith."*

FR. DENIS THEROUX



(Clockwise from top) 1. Patrons enjoying an evening talk in the Vatican. 2. Fr. Denis Theroux celebrates Holy Mass in the Presentation Chapel, where the crystal casket of Pope Piux X lays beneath the altar. 3. Patrons special access viewing of the Michigan Chapter funded restoration of Raphael's "Blinding of Elymas" tapestry. 4. 2019 PAVM pilgrims in the Sistine Chapel.



RESTORATION PROJECT UPDATE

Restoration of the Chinese *"Tapestry of Painted and Embroidered Silk"*, a project supported by the PAVM-MI, began in April 2014 with various unavoidable interruptions.

Dating back to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) this silk, cotton canvas, porcelain and metal wire tapestry measures 475 x 297 cm (approximately 15.50 x 9.70 ft.)

The most recent Vatican Museums Polymathic Restoration Laboratory report stated that this tapestry "is a rare example of meticulous, realistic embroidery, framed by a central inscription made with Indian ink narrating the vicissitudes of the Chinese imperial court of the 19th century." The overall condition of the piece was very poor at the beginning of the restoration.

There were numerous lacerations on the entire silk fabric surface that needed to be reinforced and restored. There were also several signs of possible insect erosion that led to a complex disinfestation process. Disinfestation required the use of a barrier film envelope that hermetically sealed in the tapestry for 25-30 days. A thorough mechanical air cleaning was applied to the entire surface of the lining so as to remove dust and particulates "anchored to the textile

substrate with weak interactions." Yarns, threads and fabrics were dyed "in order to reach the chromatic gradation (of color) that best suited the different patchy areas" within the tapestry.

This six year restoration project is scheduled for completion by Spring 2020. One of the various interruptions mentioned above included the renovation of the Missionary Ethnological Museum within the Vatican Museums.



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Renovatio covers news and events for the Michigan Chapter of the Patrons. The Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums is a select group of people dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of the vast and unique collection of art contained in the Vatican Museums. The name of the publication, *Renovatio*, is the Latin translation of the word *renewal*.

Co-chair John Hale

jhale@ctscentral.net, (313) 565-8888

Co-chair Tony Rea

Tonyrea_area@hotmail.com, (248) 357-0999

Printing Corporate Travel, CTCentral.net

Editor Kathleen Bordo Crombie, dignityoflife@yahoo.com

Designer Jeanne Stevenson, info@CardsForHisGlory.com



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To become a Patron, please visit: MIPatrons.com

For more information about becoming a Patron, please contact Membership Chair Maureen Soens at dpartistry@comcast.net or (248) 842-5126