



An update from the Michigan Chapter of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums



A Patron's view of the Vatican from the inside in route to the Large Tapestry Restoration Lab.



The Bramante Garden is a must see when visiting the Vatican Museums.

Everything is better with Wine

Due to statewide safety COVID protocols, the first 2020 Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums - Michigan Chapter (PAVM-MI) event kicked off the year on August 12th at Antonio's Cucina Italiano Canton restaurant. International Director of the PAVM, Fr. Kevin Lixey, LC shared information about the chapter's current and proposed projects in Rome. Dr. Elizabeth Lev and Dr. Thomas Williams were the featured speakers for the private wine tasting, with light appetizers and some fascinating history about wine in Italy.

We learned that the Romans turned the making of wine into a major industry. In fact, they have been given credit for the wine press, the trellis and drinking wine out of a glass. And, tasting wine out of a glass is what we all came to do. But making sure everyone was on the same page, it was important to hold your filled



wine glass by the stem and do the following: see, swirl, sniff, sip and savor. Being very good students, the 60 socially distanced guests sampled various wines that included Meiomi, a red Pinot Noir, and a Super Tuscan known as Villa Calacinaia.

A delightfully wonderful evening, it was good to be together to celebrate the arts, wine and friendships made through the PAVM.



Restoration of priceless artwork in the Vatican Museums is what the PAVM does. One exciting and new project the Michigan Chapter has recently agreed to fund, are Five icons from the Tower of Pope John XXIII.

The five icons include: Icon with Madonna of Jaroslavl; Icon with Christ Pantocrator, Princess Olga and St. Peter; Icon with Madonna of Kazan; Icon with Triptych of Deesis; and Icon with Madonna of Vladimir. Each written by various iconographers at different times in history (1500 – 1917), the dimensions vary, but all have been written with tempera paint on wood, silver, gold, enamels and gemstones. The provenience states that all five icons are of Russian origin. Total cost of the restoration: € 34,000.

The restorations will be conducted by the Vatican Museum's Department of Medieval & Byzantine Art. Restoration procedures will include structural consolidation, cleaning of the metal riza covering(s), plastering of works, chromatic restoration of painted surfaces, the application of protective paint, restoration of valuable metal covers (made of silver and gold) varnishes and stones, as well as photographic documentation.

Research will also include a historical analysis of each icon, as well as the current state of preservation. In order to avoid future damage caused by contact between the metal coverings and the painted surfaces, further research will be conducted to focus on new protective methods for the metal covers. The study of new display methods for each icon will also be undertaken.

In future issues of *Renovatio*, we will take a closer look at the historical background for each icon title and



(Left) Icon with Madonna of Kazan and (right) detail of the Neoclastic Relief

discuss more about the world of religious iconography.

But wait ... there's more! The Michigan Chapter has also agreed to fund the restoration of a second new project: Four marble artworks from the Niche of Apollo de Belvedere. The Vatican Museums Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities will oversee and conduct this restoration project. Total cost of the restoration: € 50,000.

The artists names and dates are unknown, but we do know a bit more about each of the four individual marble pieces. The Neoclastic Relief measures 100 x 175 cm, with an ancient section that is 85 cm high. This piece is of two female figures and a bull. Only part of the relief, the right section is considered ancient as it dates back to the Hadrian Age.

The Front of a Continuous Frise Sarcophagus dates back to 220-230 A.D. A lion-hunting scene is depicted on the front

of the artwork. While the older section is 135 x 100 cm, the front measures 185 x 125 cm.

The Statue of Athena Promachos holds a shield while dressed in a peplum and aegis. According to dictionary.com, a peplum is "a short skirt attached to a bodice or jacket," and an aegis is "the shield or breastplate of Zeus or Athena"

In her left arm she holds the head of Medusa. The statue is 157 cm high.

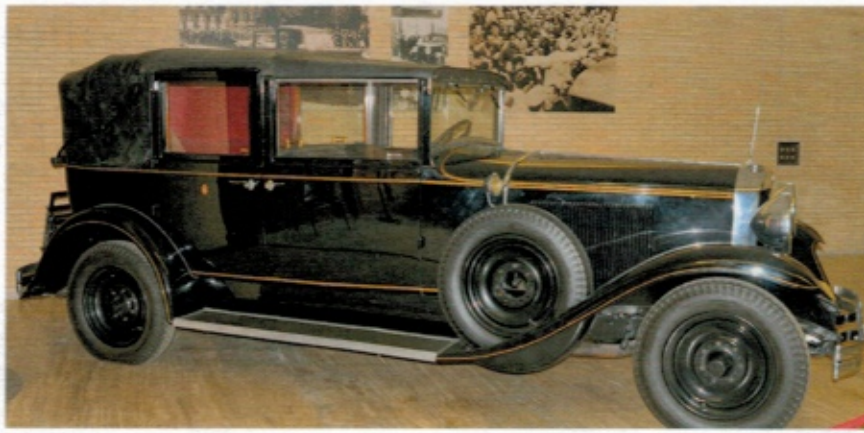
The Statue of a Female Figure measures 134 cm high, and may well be a portrayal of a muse clothed in chiton (a high-

waisted gown). The head, measuring 24 cm, is not part of the original piece. The body dates back to the second half of the II century AD, while the head dates back to the late I – early II century AD. Resting on a pillar, she holds a helmet in her left hand.

Completion dates have yet to be established for both of these new projects, but suffice it to say, we will keep you updated in coming issues of the *Renovatio* about the progress in Rome.

If you would like to know more about these restoration projects and/or make a donation towards the funding, please contact John Hale at jhale@ctscentral.net





The Graham Paige Update

BY DALE CHIARA, PAVM-MI Board of Director

The Graham-Paige Type 837 restoration has been pushed forward to the 2022-2023 calendar as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we patiently wait for the vehicle to arrive in the United States for the restoration to begin, let's briefly explore who the Graham Brothers were and why they made such a generous donation to the Holy See.

The three Graham Brothers were Detroit auto manufacturers and fervent Catholics who had a desire "to convey a token of their respective devotion to Pope Pius XI, who had kindly rewarded their activity on behalf of religious foundations." The brothers had been knighted previously in 1928 as members of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

The vehicle's significance is worthy of attention as it was the first Popemobile to be used by a sitting Pontiff following the Lateran Treaty of February 11, 1929. The Treaty itself recognized the full sovereignty of the Holy See in the State of Vatican City. As a practical matter, it allowed the head of the Roman Catholic Church to freely travel outside the walls of Vatican City, a privilege not previously accorded.

Although Pope Pius XI had other cars available to him by donation (a Fiat 525 N Limo and Isotta Fraschini 8A), he frequently chose the Graham Paige laudulet and it became his favorite. His initial trip was to San Giovanni Laterano,

and later often used for trips to the papal summer residence and vacation retreat in Castel Gandolfo. In 1939, when Pope Pius XI traveled to Quirinal to visit the King of Italy, the Graham Paige was his motor car of choice.

Upon the death of Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII became the immediate Apostolic Successor. Gravely ill during the last months of his life, Pope Pius XII asked that he be driven through the Vatican Gardens in the Graham Paige. It was the smoothest riding car in the Vatican garages, and the Holy Father used it extensively. Following his death in 1958, the car was removed from service and placed in the Vatican Museum. Upon the vehicle's retirement, the odometer read 27,266 kilometers, suggesting regular usage of the Graham Paige compared to the other fleet vehicles, with minimal odometer readings, for the same time period.

References:
The Graham Legacy: Graham-Paige to 1932
 by Michael E. Keller,
 1998, MT Publishing



(Above) Interior with the throne-like seat of the Graham-Paige.
 (Bottom L-R) Fr. Kevin Lixey, Kristan and John Hale, Dale and Patty Chiara.



COMPLETION OF THE PALA DEGLI ODDI: *Coronation of the Virgin* Oddi Altarpiece

A RESTORATION, completed just in time for the 500th Anniversary of Raphael's death, is the Pala degli Oddi. Also known as the "Coronation of the Virgin" (Oddi Altarpiece), restoration began in 2019. Funded by PAVM-MI members/donors Karmita and Charlie Gusmano, they shared, "We were humbled to have had the opportunity to participate in the restoration of the Oddi Altarpiece to continue to show the beauty of Raphael's Coronation of the Virgin."

Raphael, a master Italian Renaissance painter, was commissioned to create this altarpiece for the Oddi Family Chapel within the church of San Francesco al Prato in Perugia, Italy. It is believed the altarpiece was painted between 1503 and 1504 for the heirs of Guido degli Oddi. Until the Treaty of Tolentino dictated the removal of the artwork to France in 1797, the Raphael work remained in the family chapel.

A radical and extensive restoration began when the altarpiece arrived in Paris. The goal was to change the material supporting the painting from wood to canvas. Although a most invasive restoration process that is not a recommendation today, the same restorers also, with great precision and success, were able to accomplish the same process on another Raphael

painting – the "Madonna di Foligno." Both artworks became part of the Vatican Pinacoteca in 1817, and in 1957 the Pala

degli Oddi was restored by the Vatican Museums restoration laboratory.

2011 was the year the "Madonna di Foligno" was successfully restored. Noting that the "Madonna di Foligno" and the Pala degli Oddi have the same historical background, in 2019 the current director of the Vatican Museums decided a new restoration of the Pala degli Oddi should also be undertaken.

The 2019 restoration of the Oddi Altarpiece included paint alterations and touch-ups, but also addressed some problem areas in the Virgin's blue mantle and in St. Peter's blue garment. According to the *Final Restoration Report* from the Vatican Museums, "Linked to an overlap of many layers of oxidized paint, the alteration of blue pigment is even older than the pigments dating back to the last restoration. Never completely removed, but always added on top of one another, restorers obtained an initial improvement in the color rendering of the original pictorial structure. Over time, the color inevitably canceled itself out to become a gray, dull, and flat layer."

The Vatican Museums Scientific Research Cabinet conducted extensive, microscopic study of the lapis lazuli blue pigment. Noting that the large particle structure of this particular material, a diffraction effect was created; a visual bleaching. Continuing to carefully clean the painting, more layered paint tests were conducted to stabilize the surface. Restorers cleaned the painting, in addition to retouching numerous small

gaps and scratches. Upon completion, the colors in the painting appear bright and clean, very close to the way Raphael intended more than 500 years ago.



Karmita and Charlie Gusmano and family



Completed restoration in the

VATICAN GARDENS



Carol and Bill Brewis have been members of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums-MI for approximately 11 years. Thanks to their project-specific funding through the chapter, the *Madonna della Guardia* (Our Lady of the Guard) section of the Vatican Gardens was completed in 2017. Having the opportunity to interview the couple, we asked them how and why they decided to sponsor this particular restoration.



Photo by Dianne Ahearn

Why did you join the PAVM-MI Chapter and continue as members?

We have been blessed by God in so many ways that we are trying to help others see the beauty of His creation. It has brought us to come to worship God more and we're trying to help others have a similar experience.

How did the *Madonna della Guardia* restoration project come to your attention?

We were told that Pope Benedict XVI prayed his Rosary in the garden every day, and we heard that it was in need of repair. So in a desire to honor Our Lady, and also give Benedict solace in his prayers, we decided to fund restoration of that area.

Why did you choose this particular restoration project to sponsor?

Our love for our Heavenly Mother, and seeing the disrepair of this beautiful statue to us. On a personal level, Mother Mary has "guarded" us and our family through many trials and she is a source of consolation for us, her children.

Have you visited Rome to see the completed restoration?

We visited while it was in process, but have not had the opportunity to return and see the finished project.

What is the significance of the project for you and your family?

We are hoping to plan a visit with our 3 children, their spouses and our 10 grandchildren soon. Based on photos shared by friends who have visited, it looks amazing.



Anything else you'd like our members/readers to know about this restoration project?

Beauty is one of the transcendental virtues along with Goodness and Truth. Given the turmoil in the world about what is good and true, beauty seems to touch more people in our culture. We are so blessed to be a part of the work of sharing beauty.

PAVM-MI thanks Carol and Bill Brewis for their generosity and ongoing patronage to the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums.

The Blinding of Elymas

The 17th century Raphael tapestry, *The Blinding of Elymas*, is an ongoing project funded by the Stange Trust and Trustee, David Stone, as well as matching funds from PAVM-MI. The subject of this tapestry is St. Paul's first miracle following his conversion.

Commissioned by Pope Leo X in 1515, this tapestry was one in a series of ten that were created to hang on the lower walls of the Sistine Chapel. The series titled, *The Acts of the Apostles*, was exhibited in the Sistine Chapel during the week of February 17, 2020 as part of a special exhibition to honor the 500th Anniversary of master artist, Raphael. *The Blinding of Elymas*, even though the restoration was not complete, hung with the other nine tapestries to complete the exhibited series. Scheduled to be a celebratory week in Rome, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic struck and the exhibition experienced a short viewing.

Returned to the textile restoration laboratory in late February 2020, the work continued on *The Blinding of Elymas*. To say the restorers have a time-consuming job and fine detail work to carryout, would be an understatement. Every stitch is done by hand. Every thread is dyed to the exact color and shade required for particular area of the tapestry. Every detail is documented. Hours and hours of hands on work go into the restoration of this incredible textile art.

Looking back at the annual update reports from the Vatican Museums beginning in 2016, we gain a better appreciation for the expertise and time dedicated to this restoration project. The initial evaluation report noted several areas of past restoration requiring attention; areas of detached fabric. After a detailed study in the Tapestry Restoration Laboratory, the best techniques for restoration were determined and implemented.

The 2017 update report pointed out the two main sections of the tapestry: the woven top half, and the bottom painted half (painted in 1931 by the Vatican Museums



Restoration Laboratory to replace the missing lower portion). At that time, the restoration focused solely on the woven portion of the tapestry. Immersed in water for delicate cleaning, the tapestry was then dried and set on a frame to allow for alternative threading for consolidation.

In 2018, the proper colors and shades were established for the dyeing of silk and wool thread. Work on the 10 ft. x 13 ft. tapestry continued in 2019 and today in 2020. With great anticipation, we continue to patiently wait to see the full beauty of the completed Raphael restoration.



(Above) Hundreds of spools of thread, with slight color variations, are dyed and ready for use in the restoration.

(Left) Skillful hands at work restoring the tapestry.

(Right) A behind-the-scenes tour for PAVM members.

A NIGHT to Remember

GREAT MEMORIES are like great wine – they should be savored. Such a memory was the 2019 Annual PAVM-MI Advent Dinner at the Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

PAVM-MI Chaplain, Fr. J.J. Mech, celebrated Holy Mass before moving to the country club for cocktails, fellowship and dinner, as coordinated by board member, Beth Moore. Following a most elegant feast, special guest speakers from The Detroit Institute of Arts shared their expertise and research findings regarding the famous Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting "The Wedding Dance." Aaron Steele (Conservation Imaging Specialist) and Ellen Hanspach-Bernal (Painting Conservator) presented a most informative overview about the painting, the artist and its history. With great anticipation for the year to come, it is our hope and prayer that the Annual PAVM-MI Advent Dinner will resume in 2021. We look forward to hosting our members, and their guests, as we continue to make great memories together for many years to come.



Group photos by SocialSallyG.com

ROME

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 BY LIZ LEV

Photos by Liz Lev
(Top)

St. Peter's Square
in Rome
(Middle)



St. Maria in
Trastevere
(Bottom)

Trevi Fountain



Looking out my window on Via Gregorio VII, a stone's throw from St Peter's, I am delighted to see a traffic jam. After months of empty streets, erratic shop openings, and stragglers scurrying along sidewalks, Rome is reawakening. Kids are back in school, playing sports in the afternoon, and the sight of young people seems to be rejuvenating the entire city. Congeniality has supplanted suspicion as our denizens, (duly masked,) stop for coffee and chat outside the shops (only one inside at a time). For the first time since March, it feels like the Romans are finally ready to return to normalcy.

Meanwhile in the artworld, Rome is a wonderland. 3,000 visitors a day at the Vatican, as opposed to 30,000, no lines at the Coliseum, and the leisure to visit the less-famous sites, without the exhaustion from a day of fighting crowds. Visiting the Trevi Fountain the other day it was so quiet, I didn't want to leave – we actually looked at the fountain and talked about its beauty and meaning instead of battling our way to the front for the coin toss.

Even Pope Francis seems to be enjoying this tranquility: last month, on the Feast of St Monica, he dropped by the Basilica of Sant Agostino to pray before her tomb!

This peaceful Rome presents an unforeseen opportunity to rethink tourism: instead of the rapid consumption of the past years, racing from city to city and site to site, this is a good time to get to know Rome, its hidden treasures, its unexpected encounters, its deep and relevant history. I am very much looking forward to sharing the Rome 2.0 experience with the Michigan Patrons as soon as the final barriers fall, and you are free to "roam" again!

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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*.

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Michigan Chapter
Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums

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