



TEXAS CHAPTER REPORT

Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums



Fr. Kevin Lixey introduces the Noli Me Tangere tapestry project.

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Celebrating the “Year of Raphael”: A Visit From the Vatican

On February 28, 29 and March 1, at Brennan’s of Houston, Tarry House in Austin, and the home of Ann and Bob Dyer on Lakeside Drive in Dallas, respectively, the Patrons offered a glimpse behind the scenes at the Vatican Museums.

Fr. Kevin Lixey, the International Director of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, visiting from Rome, presented the mission of our organization to both members and guests as they enjoyed the excellent food and company. The event in Houston was organized by our board President, Mrs. Lori Wrinkle, in Austin by board member Dr. Carol Ikard, and in Dallas it was a joint effort by our Executive Director, Daniel Hennessy, with Ann Dyer, the hostess, and our team of interns.

In his presentations, Fr. Kevin described the current restoration projects which the Texas Chapter of the Patrons are funding for the “Year of Raphael,” the 500th anniversary of the Renaissance artist’s death. His presentation contained images of famous artworks in the Vatican, especially works which the Texas Chapter helped restore. Guests were informed of “the need for preserving these treasures,” Ikard said.

Fr. Kevin’s presentation is a valuable look into the beauty of the pieces and the significant work of the Patrons for their restoration. According to his presentation, 70% of all restoration projects in the Vatican Museums are financed by the Patrons.

As an employee who regularly walks through the halls of the Vatican, “I can become accustomed to how accessible the beauty of the Raphael Rooms or his Tapestries are for me,” Fr. Kevin said. His awe for the beauty of the Vatican artworks was rekindled through the excitement from the guests seeing them for the first time.

Along with Fr. Kevin’s presentation, current members took the opportunity to share their experience as Patrons on their visits to the Vatican. Joe Pacetti, a longtime board member of the Texas Chapter, offered his thoughts: “I’ve lost count of how many times I’ve gone on this trip,” Pacetti said. “I’m overwhelmed



Ann and Bob Dyer hosted the event at their home on March 1, 2020.

every time I go.”

Fr. Kevin was pleased at the reaction to his presentation at the different events in Austin, Houston and Dallas. “I was glad to have the chance to expand our network of patrons by recalling the great legacy patrons have played in the last 37 years in their efforts to restore so many of the works of Raphael and his school,” Fr. Kevin said.

Most everyone present felt inspired to get involved in the mission of the Patrons in one way or another, and the Texas Chapter received numerous pledges of membership and support.

Texas Chapter Rome Guide Offers Virtual Tours

Jill Alexy contributed greatly to the success of the Texas Chapter’s tour of the Vatican this past October. Several participants of the trip said Alexy was among the best tour guides they have ever had. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, with museums closed and travel nearly impossible, Alexy has turned to technology to continue to deliver a multi-sensory experience of some of the cultural treasures of Rome.

Alexy is intimately familiar with both the major sites of Rome and the Vatican Museums, as well as the hidden nooks and crannies: she always finds a way to show her visitors something they have not seen before. She is especially recognized for her ability to blend the artistic patrimony of the Church with its theological tradition, making both accessible and vivid.

Alexy is the Founder of Martyrian Journeys and has collaborated with the Patrons since 2013 as an independent consultant and tour guide. Many of the Patrons, whether as individuals, family groups, or as part of an official Chapter visit to the Vatican, have participated in tours she has organized. As fortune would have it, Alexy was attending a conference in the U.S. when Italy entered lockdown this spring, and although she is not yet able to return to her office near the Vatican, she continues to share the wonders of Rome.



Jill Alexy leads a tour through the Gallery of Maps.

Through her Martyrian Journeys website www.seethesacred.com, Alexy is improving already existing virtual tours of the Vatican Museums, including special looks at the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter’s Basilica offered in May.

While she recognizes that the virtual experience cannot replace a face-to-face encounter with the art and architecture, Alexy appreciates the “leisure” which the technology offers. Accustomed to strict time limits when she guides visitors through the museums, Alexy says the virtual tours provide an opportunity for “an in-depth approach which I could never otherwise give.”

Alexy has teamed up with a handful of professors to complete several recorded virtual tours of some of her favorite locations. They accomplished their project by sharing their screens and delivering their explanations of the artwork in view. The virtual tour project of Martyrian Journeys was launched April 8 at the start of Holy Week and will be offered throughout the summer months. Visitors are encouraged to RSVP online, and then to be prepared to relax, sip some wine, and let the expert guides enhance their online experience of historical and religious art.

Alexy is looking forward to when Rome opens to the general public again, but hopes that when it does, it will be a beautiful, quiet place without the usual onslaught of tourists crowding the cobblestone streets. She encourages the Texas Patrons to visit Rome again as soon as possible, but in the meantime, to enjoy the virtual offerings she and others have worked hard to produce.

Along with Martyrian Journeys virtual tours, the official site of the Vatican Museums offers seven different 360° virtual walk-throughs of major exhibits. Using arrows to navigate, guests can revisit or gaze for the first time at the Sistine Chapel and the Rooms of Raphael.

Board Member Spotlight

We remember with gratitude the immeasurable contribution made to the Texas Patrons by founding member and long time member of the board, Jim Augur (1935–2016). Jim was a passionate member of the Texas Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums during his decades-long service as Chairman Emeritus. As a successful architect and painter, Jim appreciated the opportunity to help preserve some of the most important works of art in the Western tradition. The list of restoration projects funded by the Texas Chapter under Jim's leadership is too long to include here; suffice it to say that parts of the Sistine Chapel and the Pauline Chapel feature prominently among them.

Jim especially enjoyed the Texas Chapter Rome trips which he participated in several times. In 1994, Jim traveled to Rome with



Jim Augur with his mother Louise Augur and Pope John Paul II in 1994.



Barry and Margaret Hancock in the Octagonal Courtyard of the Vatican Museums in 2017.

Jim often opened up his home for dinners and gatherings of the Texas Patrons. Father Nathaniel Haslam, current Chaplain and member of the board, recalls with fondness a Wine and Hor D'Oeuvres event hosted by Jim in April 2014. The event included a discussion concerning current restoration projects, new membership, and the Texas Chapter trip to Rome planned for the following year.

Undoubtedly, both the Vatican Museums and the city of Dallas have a brighter present and future thanks to Jim's generous philanthropy and leadership. Jim passed away in September 2016. His legacy as an enthusiastic member of the Texas Patrons endures in the works he helped restore and the people he rallied to the cause. Jim's son-in-law, Barry Hancock, is currently a board member of the Texas Chapter.

The Tabella of the Pontifical Army

Long-time board member of the Texas Patrons, Mr. Joe Pacetti, is usually easily recognized by his unabashed delight in fine jewelry. Less visible, but probably more important for him, is his generosity in caring for those in need and supporting causes he loves. The Texas Chapter has been blessed to count him as a member from its inception. To quote his own nephew, Mr. Doug Burke, “Uncle Joe” often speaks about “his calling to the preservation of its [the Vatican] art, museum, and historical significance.”



Doug and Brandy Burke visit the Vatican lab to see the restored Drawing of the Pontifical Army.

Following his theme of “easily overlooked generosity”, Mr. Pacetti recently donated the funds needed to restore a very little known artifact that memorializes an equally unknown chapter of Church and Papal history: The Drawing of the Pontifical Army Tabella. This historical document depicts the army of Pope Pius VI prior to its major defeat by Napoleon’s forces in 1796.

The defeat of the Pontifical army was a significant event in the late eighteenth-century after which Pope Pius VI was forced to cede various Italian regions, then part of the Papal States, to Napoleon. This defeat eventually led to Pope Pius being taken prisoner and held in Valence, France, where he remained till his death. Thanks to the restoration of this rare drawing, historians have regained a glimpse at the structure and role of the Pontifical Army during the late 18th century.

The drawing is finely detailed in ink, tempura, and watercolor. These components unfortunately resulted in the work being particularly vulnerable to becoming soiled and stained, apart from the usual withering of such a manuscript as it ages. Previously held in the Historical Museum at the Papal Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Drawing of the Pontifical Army was moved to the Historical Collections of the Vatican Museums within the last five years.

Dr. Sandro Barbagallo, Curator of the Paper Laboratory of the Vatican Museums, and himself an expert in the history of Papal men-at-arms, oversaw the restoration of the manuscript. The process included cleaning and reinforcing the decaying canvas. After several months undergoing treatment, the Drawing of the Pontifical Army has been returned to its display in St. John Lateran.

In October 2019, Mr. Pacetti’s nephew, Doug Burke, attended the Texas Chapter visit to Rome. Burke appreciates the “extraordinary experience”, and especially the opportunity to view the recently restored Drawing of the Pontifical Army, which was literally unveiled for that occasion. Burke said he considered the document, a “remarkable example of the painstaking time and meticulous handy work that goes into the restoration of one single piece or work of art within the Vatican Museums walls.” Upon learning that his “Uncle Joe” contributed to the drawing’s repair, Burke understood more clearly Mr. Pacetti’s expressions of affection for Rome and the works of art housed at the Vatican. Mr. Burke has known for a long time about his uncle’s dedication to this cause, and now he was able to witness it first hand.

This project was especially dear to Mr. Pacetti himself because for the first time he was able to fund a restoration with the help of his husband, Mr. Arnold Pacetti, in commemoration of their first anniversary.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2020

Summer

Check the Texas Chapter Website (www.texasvaticanpatrons.org) and your emails for invitations to virtual tours provided by some of our best guides

Fall

Texas Patrons at the Meadows Museum of Art. Details to be announced.

2021

Official Texas Chapter Pilgrimage to Rome and the Vatican

The Texas Chapter of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums makes an official visit to the Vatican every other year. Please join us for the next trip in late October, 2021. Exact dates and details to be announced.