

February 2, 2024

## From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

Dear Friends,

The Illinois Patrons of the Arts of the Vatican Museums (IPAVM) was established by Cardinal Bernardin in 1993. In the structure he created, the Archbishop of Chicago serves as the Chairman of the board and appoints a priest as the Cardinal's representative. It was in my capacity as the Cardinal's representative that I accompanied a group of 32 Pilgrims to the Jubilee in Rome during this past week. Since 2009 Anne Shea has voluntarily served as the President of IPAVM. There are over 200 full members and 600 associates. For the past ten years the "Art and Faith" series of presentations and lectures has focused on the transformative power of art as a carrier of faith.

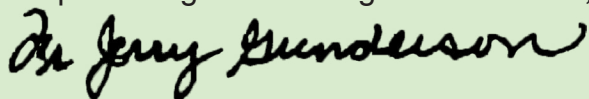
Spending four days in various parts of the Museums at the Vatican with excellent guides and behind the scenes access was a rare opportunity. At the Apostolic Palace, we celebrated Mass in the Governatorato Chapel, had a private visit to the Sistine Chapel, and had dinner with Cardinal Cupich in the Borgia Apartments. On the way to the chapel, we stopped at the balcony from which a new Pope is introduced to the world. You may recall that Pope Francis humbly asked for the prayers of the world from that balcony. At the Papal audience I had the honor to meet the Holy Father.

At the restoration labs, we learned about restoration techniques and preliminary steps taken to determine how to best preserve the art for future generations. We were also able to observe the restoration of a 15th century painting, "The Lament of the Dead Christ" by Giovanni Bellini, an important Venetian artist. Upon the completion of this restoration capping off a long career, the restorer, Marco Pratelli, will retire. The painting will be part of a special exhibition at Castelgandolfo in March. When we met with Barbara Jatta, the director of the 12 Vatican Museums and a Papal appointee, she offered to the Illinois Chapter the opportunity to make the restoration of the painting a special project of the Chapter. She also gave us a copy of the underpainting discovered during the preliminary study for the restoration. The PAVM staff in Rome were our gracious hosts.

"Pilgrims of Hope" is the theme of the Jubilee Year 2025 and months of preparation gave the entire city a fresh face. In addition to St. Peter's Basilica, we entered through the Holy Doors of St John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside the Walls. There is a fifth Holy Door at the prison of Rome. For obvious reasons, that was not part of our itinerary, but speaks loudly of Pope Francis's desire that the mercy of God be extended to everyone during the observance of the Jubilee.

Castel Gandolfo is the Pope's summer villa in the Alban hills 45 minutes from Rome. Pope Francis prefers to remain in the Vatican in the summer months. So he has decided to open the grounds to visitors and to make Castel Gandolfo a center to foster the implementation of his encyclical "Laudato Si, On the Care of our Common Home". Fr. Manny Dorantes, a Chicago priest, was recently made it's director. He gave us a quick tour. On our final day we made a courtesy call to the home of the U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican.

Sometime in the next five months, in collaboration with the Illinois Patrons, I hope to be able to schedule an event at St. Patrick on the theme, "Art as a Carrier of Faith." If you would have interest in sponsoring or attending such an event, please let me know.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson