

■ BY LUCY GORDAN

FR. MARK HAYDU

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE PATRONS OF THE VATICAN MUSEUMS

The extensive website of the Patrons of the Vatican Museums, www.vatican-patrons.org, includes detailed information on the Museums' various restorations, an impressive list of art books they've subsidized, information about the Museums' restoration labs, and how to join the Patrons and the privileges that come with joining. How did the Patrons start?

FATHER MARK HAYDU: Their beginnings date to Pope Paul VI and to his personal secretary, Monsignor Pasquale Macci, who helped His Holiness start the Museum's Contemporary Art Collection. Contacts with New York art dealers inspired the concept of bringing "friends of the Museums" here to see our collections and support our restoration projects. We owe our official founding in 1983, and early growth, to Walter Persegati, secretary/treasurer of the Vatican's Monuments, Museums, and Art Collections from 1971-1990.

Our first "friends" were people Msgr. Macci had met in New York. Another key early player was the first US ambassador to the Holy See, William Wilson. Familiar with the American model of supporting the arts through private donations, he helped us set up our first Chapters in New York, California, Florida, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

Was Persegati the Patrons' first coordinator?

HAYDU: Yes. After Persegati, Father Allen Duston, O.P., held the position from 1994 until I came on three years ago.

Today the Patrons have US chapters in California, DC/Baltimore, Florida, Georgia (the newest chapter is in Atlanta), Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas. They are also in Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Scotland, Portugal, and the Principality of Monaco. How many Patrons are there all together?

HAYDU: About 1,500 Patrons in 22 Chapters sponsoring some 40 projects per year. The Chapter with the most members is Canada's because it encompasses the whole country. Our most active Chapters are Canada, California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York. Cleveland and Detroit are growing very quickly. The

UK Chapter helped sponsor the Raphael Tapestries exhibit with the V&A around the recent papal visit.

Are there Patrons not from the USA, Canada, and the above-mentioned European countries?

HAYDU: Yes, an International Chapter includes all the Patrons from places where there aren't enough people, at least 15 to 20, to form a Chapter: South America, Australia, and in Europe, Belgium and Luxembourg primarily.

If Portugal has a Chapter, why don't other majority Catholic countries like Italy?

HAYDU: We'd love to set up an Italian Chapter. The private sector's support of the arts is growing in Italy. However, as with any non-profit, you must find the right local leader because local Chapters aren't run directly from my office here in Vatican City. My staff counts three employees and two guides on call. Chapters everywhere found and organize themselves. Our membership comes from many religious backgrounds, but shares a deep appreciation of the arts and culture. The Patrons have a close working relationship with their local bishop. Most of our Chapters include members of the local clergy; some, like Chicago and New York, have chaplains assigned by the local bishop or archbishop. Our national US chaplain is Mon-

signor Terry Hogan in the Archdiocese of Miami, Florida.

How can our readers join?

HAYDU: By contacting Lorna Richardson, who runs our national office: 43430 E. Florida Avenue, Suite F, PMB 322, Helmet, California 92544; tel. 951-658-9834; FAX 951-658-9564; e-mail: membership-usa@vm-patrons.com. Our Patrons are a family; we're not just a fundraising organization but seek to support each other through faith and personal friendship.

The Patrons' site includes a short biography of you, but can you tell me about your vocation?

HAYDU: Every vocation begins with an invitation from God. I'm the only religious in my church-attending Catholic family of Hungarian, Italian and Polish descent, although one of my four brothers was a lay missionary with me after high school in Mexico and Guatemala. Working with some Franciscans in the trash dump of Guatemala City, handing out medicines, consoling, and being



Father Mark Haydu in his office (Galazka photo)

close to the local people, is where I discovered my vocation, God's call to serve. When I returned home to Akron, Ohio, I talked to my parish priest who'd known me all my life. He encouraged my "calling" and told me about the dioceses as well as the Legionaries of Christ. After experiencing both, I joined the Legionaries at age 21 in 1993 and haven't looked back since. Fourteen years of formation followed at their seminaries in Connecticut, Dublin, Salamanca, and *Regina Apostolorum* here in Rome. I was ordained in Santa Maria Maggiore on December 22, 2007, by Archbishop Luigi De Magistris.

You're an official guide for the excavations under St. Peter's Basilica. What's your view on whether St. Peter's actual bones are there?

HAYDU: Based on the archeological evidence as well as the evidence tradition supplies, there's an exceedingly strong case that the central tomb under St. Peter's main altar contains Peter's bones. From a theological point of view, it isn't essential to the faith that these particular bones belong to Peter, but the stones and the testimony of many holy persons certainly point in that direction.

How did you become the Patrons' international coordinator at such a young age?

HAYDU: The *Governatorato* asked my superiors if they knew someone who spoke English and had knowledge of art and architecture plus experience in tour guiding and public relations.

What's your typical day like?

HAYDU: From 8 am on I'm available for the Patrons who come to visit the Museums. That means arranging their tour of the Sistine Chapel which affords them front-of-the-line entry. Afterwards, here in my office, I explain the effort that the Holy Father and his predecessors have put into cultivating artistic patrimony, not for their own enrichment, but for the good of humanity. Our American Patrons especially are impressed by how much the Church has accomplished over the centuries to preserve the Vatican's patrimony for them.

I also support the Museums' director, Dr. Antonio Paolucci, and his curators regarding their immediate restoration plans. I present these projects to our Patrons via our website's yearly "wishbook" and ask them to help us defray these costs. I travel frequently to our different Chapters to update Patrons on the progress of the work they're sponsoring. I also cover the religious aspect, the spiritual



Above, Fr. Mark Haydu with the Holy Father. Below, Fr. Mark Haydu with Father Allen Duston, O.P., and Antonio Paolucci near St. Joseph Fountain (All courtesy of the Vatican Museums)



significance of our artworks and of the Church's artistic patronage, the importance of faith for artists and their sponsors over time.

On the local level, what do Chapters do?

HAYDU: They hold fundraising dinners, sponsor lectures on our artworks and on upcoming necessary restorations, and organize amazing trips to Rome and the Vatican.

How do Chapters or individuals choose which works to subsidize?

HAYDU: Our website "wishbook" entry has a list of our needs, how much each project will cost and how long each will take. There's a wide range of projects, both cost- and time-wise. A Chapter or individual can adopt a project simply by sending me an e-mail or by contacting their local Chapter leader. Otherwise involvement starts by word of mouth from a Patron.

The Patrons support restoration, traveling exhibitions which bring the Vatican's artworks to people who cannot travel to Rome, and publications. Do they ever commission new artworks?

HAYDU: Not often. The latest were Natalia Tsarkova's portrait of Pope Benedict XVI and the "Fountain of St. Joseph" in the Vatican Gardens, inaugurated last July 4. The challenge is whether contemporary art will pass the test of time and integrate into a classical world-renowned collection like ours.

Who are your favorite artists and what are your favorite works of art?

HAYDU: Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* and *The Milkmaid*. Vermeer's paintings are windows into someone else's world. Their detail highlights intimacy, human dignity and drama. Their beauty rests on the simplicity of everyday life, that anything done with love can be beautiful.

You cannot work in the Vatican Museums every day without loving Raphael, Michelangelo and Pinturicchio. I love Raphael's ability to assimilate and make his own the various artistic styles of his time, perfecting them in an unmatched synthesis; Michelangelo because of the force and strength of his human figures; his heroism; his ability to put volume and weight into simple two-dimensional forms; his background as a sculptor; and Pinturicchio's incredible ability to paint detail. He painted the Borgia Apartments in record time (two years). Yet his speed didn't sacrifice quality or beauty. The Patrons have restored works by all three artists and are currently restoring more works by Raphael and Pinturicchio. ○