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University of Dayton

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NEWS RELEASE

COLLECTION OF RARELY SEEN ART FROM VATICAN MUSEUMS COMING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON IN 2003

DAYTON, Ohio — The University of Dayton will be among the few venues permitted to exhibit a collection of multicultural, multi-century art devoted to Mary, the Mother of God, outside its permanent home in the Vatican.

"The Mother of God: Art Celebrates Mary," a collection of 38 pieces spanning the early fourth century through the late 20th century, will arrive at UD in September 2003 for a two-month exhibit in the Roesch Library first-floor gallery and seventh-floor Marian Library gallery. Pieces include oil on canvas and copper, tempera and gold on panel, carved sections of sarcophagi in marble, and statuary in wood, bronze, ivory, lead and soapstone. Private donations will cover the cost of transporting, insuring and securing the art.

Although the collection is housed in the Vatican Museums, many of the pieces are in areas accessible only to scholars for study. Those pieces have rarely been seen by the public aside from the exhibit's rare tours outside of Rome, which include a recent extended stay at the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C.

Though relatively modest in size, the multimedia collection comprehensively describes the Virgin Mother's impact and influence on societies around the world and throughout the span of Christian history. A scene of the Epiphany is etched into the fine-grained, white Italian marble lid of an early-fourth-century sarcophagus. Soft, full-figured Renaissance images of Mary in oil by Claudio Ridolfi, Daniel Seghers and Scarsellino starkly contrast the thin, long and peaceful Marian face carved in wood by Adamo Kamte in 1990 and the tormented face of a mother holding her wounded son in Francesco Messina's 1950 bronze Pietà.

Ethnic features reflect the cultures of Africa, China, Korea, Greece, Central Europe, Russia, Brazil and the Solomon Islands. In spite of their differences, the images share a common and timeless portrayal of Mary as loving Mother and intercessor, a central figure in salvation history.

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The exhibit is divided into six sections — Eve and Mary, The Incarnation, The Theotókos (Mother of God), Images of Prayer, Mary in Cultures Around the World and Walking with Mary in the Third Millennium — each introduced by text from the writings of Pope John Paul II.

“It’s an honor to exhibit art of this caliber and that comes from the world-famous Vatican Museums,” said Father Johann Roten, S.M., director of the Marian Library-International Marian Research Institute, which holds the largest collection of printed materials on Mary. “For us, an exhibit on Mary which is not ours highlights our mission and our ties to the Vatican, and shows they recognize the work we are doing here.

“This exhibit will also open the doors and windows of the University of Dayton to illustrious international art and provide an opportunity for reflection and exchange among scholars.” Roten said he will work with faculty from various disciplines within the College of Arts and Sciences to organize a series of discussions and projects for students in keeping with the University’s educational mission.

The Marian Library, located on the seventh floor of Roesch, regularly exhibits professional Marian art in its foyer gallery to help draw visitors to campus and the library. The Vatican exhibit will be the second in what Roten believes will be an ongoing biennial series of internationally renowned art, which started in 2001 with an exhibit of rare print art by renowned 20th-century European expressionists.

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