

Pope: Library Safeguards Faith-Culture Link

Benedict XVI Visits Vatican Secret Archives

VATICAN CITY, JUNE 25, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- In a visit to the Vatican Library and Secret Archives, Benedict XVI told employees that their task is to safeguard the link between faith and culture.

The Pope visited the library today, a few weeks before it is scheduled to be closed to the public for a three-year restoration project.

The Pontiff told those gathered for the visit that their task "is to safeguard the link between faith and culture that emanates from the documents and treasures you hold."

Benedict XVI praised the library as "a welcoming home of learning, culture and humanity which opens its doors to scholars from all over the world without distinction of origin, race or culture."

The Pope told the staff that the library makes it "possible to undertake not only scholarly research, of itself most laudable and praiseworthy, concerning periods distant from us in time, but also to pursue interests concerning epochs and times close to us, even very close."

However, he continued, "While research, studies and publications can increase interest in history, they can also give rise to polemics."

The Holy Father praised "the disinterested and impartial service provided by the Vatican Secret Archives," which "steer clear of sterile and often weak partisan historical viewpoints and give researchers, without hindrance or prejudice, the documents in its possession, cataloged with seriousness and competency."

Masterpieces

The Pontiff told the staff that on his 70th birthday, he asked Pope John Paul II for permission to "dedicate myself to study and research the interesting documents and find you safeguard so carefully, real masterpieces that help us to follow the story of humanity and of Christianity."

"In his providential designs, the Lord had other plans for me," Benedict XVI said, "and here I am today among you not as a passionate student of ancient texts, but as a pastor called to encourage the faithful to work together for the salvation of the world, each one carrying out God's will where he has placed them."

At the end of his visit, the Pope exhorted the staff to consider their work "as a true mission to be carried out with passion and patience, gentleness and in the spirit of faith [...] aware that the Gospel message is passed on through your coherent Christian testimony."

The Holy Father then greeted some of the employees of the two offices and members of the Hanna family, who donated the Bodmer Papyrus XIV-XV to the library. That papyrus is the most ancient existing copy of fragments from the Gospels of John and Luke, discovered in Egypt in the 1950s.

Before leaving the Vatican Library, the Pope was able to view various documents of particular historical value. He then went to the Vatican Archives.

He also visited the Meridian Hall, site of the first Vatican Observatory and the office for the study of the reform of the Gregorian calendar, and the underground archive that houses the Parchment Room.

The Vatican Library was founded in 1450 by Pope Nicholas V and houses 1,600,000 ancient and modern books; 8,300 printed documents, including 65 parchments; 150,000 manuscript codes and archive papers; 300,000 coins and medals; and some 20,000 works of art.

Pope Leo XIII opened the library to scholars in 1881.