



# VATICAN SPLENDORS

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## **CLEVELAND TO HOST ONE OF THE LARGEST COLLECTIONS OF VATICAN ART AND HISTORICAL OBJECTS EVER VIEWED IN NORTH AMERICA**

***Exhibition features reliquary holding fragments of bones of Saint Peter, personal items of Michelangelo, Bernini's sculpture, papal election objects and earliest known representation of Jesus***

***Tickets go on sale April 14***

CLEVELAND – April 10, 2008 – One of the largest collections of art, documents and historically significant objects from the Vatican ever to tour North America is coming to the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland beginning May 31, 2008, for a limited, exclusive regional engagement. *Vatican Splendors from Saint Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Museums and the Swiss Guard* will present unique objects illustrating the Vatican's impact on history and culture through 2,000 years. The timing of the exhibition commemorates the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saint Peter's Basilica, the founding of the Vatican Museums, Michelangelo's painting of the Sistine Chapel ceiling and the establishment of the Papal Swiss Guard.

"*Vatican Splendors* is visiting only three U.S. cities, so we feel very fortunate to have it come here to Cleveland," said Dr. Gainor Davis, president of the Western Reserve Historical Society. "Since such a large percentage of Northeastern Ohio's population has Catholic roots, the Society felt that this exhibition meshed perfectly with its ongoing mission to educate our residents about the origins of their history, culture and traditions. People will be able to see some of the world's greatest treasures without having to travel to the Vatican."

Approximately 200 rare objects will be presented in contextual environments, such as the recreated tomb of Saint Peter. Items in the collection – which includes tiaras; mosaics; paintings; works by well-known sculptors; papal rings and jewels; intricately embroidered silk vestments; precious objects from the Papal Mass; armor, swords and vestments of the Papal Swiss Guard; and gifts to the popes from notables such as Napoleon and the Dalai Lama – are on loan from the Vatican Museums, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Office of the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff, the Reverenda Fabbrica of Saint Peter, the Apostolic Floreria, private collections and the Papal Swiss Guard.

The exhibition also features actual objects relating to the election of Pope Benedict XVI, such as election ballots, patens and urns used in voting, a ceremonial vestment and an actual white smoke cartridge announcing the election.

"Indeed, this exhibition is in itself significant, as it represents one of the largest collections of art and objects from the Vatican ever to tour North America," stated Monsignor Roberto Zagnoli, curator of the Vatican Museums. "Many of these works have never before been outside Vatican City."

After the three-city tour of St. Petersburg, Fla., Cleveland and St. Paul, Minn., the items featured in *Vatican Splendors* will return to Rome where they cannot be absent for more than a year.

"It is a great privilege for Cleveland to host this wonderful collection," said the Most Rev. Richard G. Lennon, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all – not just Catholics – to see these awe-inspiring treasures and significant pieces of art and beauty here in Northeast Ohio."

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Highlights of the exhibition include a *reliquary containing fragments of bones of Saint Peter* and a gold *Votive Plaque* found in the area of the tomb, all displayed within a dramatic reproduction of the Tomb of Saint Peter; the *Mandylion of Edessa*, a third to fifth century image on linen considered one of the oldest known representations of Jesus present in Rome; a mosaic *Bust of an Angel* by the 14th century master, Giotto; personal items and tools of Michelangelo; an exquisite terra-cotta sculpture by Bernini; the *Papal Tiara of Pope Pius VII*, the symbol of the papacy, made of gold, precious stones, pearls, velvet and silk, and topped with an exquisite emerald; a Buddhist *Thanka* of embroidered cloth and pearls, given by the Dalai Lama to John Paul II; the *Pastoral Staff of Pope John Paul II*; and a special presentation of uniforms, armor and weapons from the legendary Papal Swiss Guard.

“This exhibition is about art, history, culture and the Church’s legacy over the last 2,000 years,” said Mark Greenberg, president of Evergreen Exhibitions, producers of the exhibition. “The Vatican has had a profound impact on culture through the centuries by commissioning, collecting and preserving historical objects and art. *Vatican Splendors* is a moving tribute to an exquisite assemblage of art and objects associated with the papacy and the historic institution of the Vatican.”

Greenberg added that the exhibition is not solely about religion, but rather a collection of fine and decorative arts that explores the Vatican’s influence on world history.

Tickets for *Vatican Splendors from Saint Peter’s Basilica, the Vatican Museums and the Swiss Guard* go on sale April 14 and will be available by calling 1-888-5VATICAN (1-888-582-8422) or online at Ticketmaster.com. Tickets also may be purchased at the Western Reserve Historical Society box office located at 10825 East Blvd. in Cleveland. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and \$14 for children (age 6-12). Hours for *Vatican Splendors* will be Monday through Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information regarding group sales and special packages, contact Tickets for Groups at 1-800-840-1157 or visit [www.ticketsforgroups.com](http://www.ticketsforgroups.com).

*Vatican Splendors* is made possible by the generosity of its sponsor, the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums of Ohio, Inc. More information about *Vatican Splendors* is available at [www.vaticansplendors.com](http://www.vaticansplendors.com). For information about the Western Reserve Historical Society, visit [www.wrhs.org](http://www.wrhs.org).

***Vatican Splendors*** is organized and circulated in conjunction with the Governatorato of the Vatican City State. The exhibition is produced by Evergreen Exhibitions in association with the Western Reserve Historical Society. Objects in the exhibition are on loan from the Office of the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Vatican Museums, the Reverenda Fabbrica of Saint Peter, and the Apostolic Floreria. Additional objects are on loan by the Papal Swiss Guard and private collections.

**The Western Reserve Historical Society** was founded in 1867, making it the oldest cultural institution in Northeast Ohio. With headquarters in University Circle, the renowned arts and culture district of Cleveland, the Society operates eight separate but related collections at four historic properties throughout the region. Its mission is to collect, preserve and present the history of all the people of Northeast Ohio.

**Evergreen Exhibitions** is a world leader in providing high quality, state-of-the-art exhibitions in collaboration with more than 200 leading museums and research institutions in the United States and internationally.

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