



# *‘So That You Might Know Each Other’*

**FAITH AND CULTURE IN ISLAM**

**COLLECTIONS FROM THE VATICAN ANIMA MUNDI  
MUSEUM, THE SHARJAH MUSEUMS AUTHORITY  
AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA**

# Foreword

In 2014 the Vatican Museums organised a major exhibition in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, in collaboration with the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization. It was the first time in the 500-year history of the Vatican Museums that its unseen treasures of Islamic art and cultures were put on exhibit in an Islamic country.

The success of the event was such that, only a few months after its closing, Fr Nicola Mapelli, head of the section of the Vatican Museums where the Islamic art is held, and curator Katherine Aigner, during a research trip to Australia, met Mathew Trinca, now Director of the National Museum of Australia, and proposed to have a similar Islamic exhibit for the Australian public. Dr Trinca gladly saw the beauty of such an idea.

In the following years the project was developed until it reached the present form: a unique collaboration among three museums — the Vatican Museums, the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, and the National Museum of Australia — with the aim of showing parts of the world of Islam from Africa and Asia to Australia through their own collections.

I have only recently become Director of the Vatican Museums, and it's always a pleasure for me to learn something new about its vast collections. As I followed the preparation of this exhibition, I was sincerely struck not only by the dedication of our team to the project, but also by the beauty and sophistication of the Islamic world. I saw firsthand, through the objects in our museum, the refined productions of people living in a vast area stretching from Africa to Australia.

I wish to commend Fr Nicola Mapelli, his collaborators Katherine Aigner and Nadia Fiussello, and the team of restorers led by Stefania Pandozy for all they have done over the past three years to prepare this exhibition. At the same time, I wish to thank our colleagues in Australia and Sharjah for their enthusiastic collaboration on this project which, I am sure, will contribute to fostering a fruitful dialogue of peace between Islam and Christianity not only in Australia but also in the rest of the world.

**Barbara Jatta**

*Director of the Vatican Museums*