

IMPORTANT PREVIEW AT THE VATICAN MUSEUMS

To commemorate the historic visit by HH Pope Benedict XVI to England and Scotland in September, the Victoria and Albert Museum, in collaboration with the Vatican Museums, will hold a unique exhibition entitled

RAPHAEL

CARTOONS AND TAPESTRIES FOR THE SISTINE CHAPEL

(LONDRA, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, 8 SETTEMBRE - 17 OTTOBRE 2010)

This exhibition is of historical and artistic importance, as it will be the first time that the surviving preparatory Cartoons, designed by Raphael in 1515-1516 (since 1865 they have been on loan from the Royal Collection to the V&A) will be presented alongside the corresponding tapestries (woven in the workshop of Pieter van Aelst in Brussels and owned by the Vatican).

The Raphael Cartoons were commissioned from the great Italian Renaissance painter Raphael Sanzio in 1515 by Pope Leo X (reigned 1513-21). The cartoons and tapestries depict the *Histories of St. Peter - "ex Lege"* and *St. Paul - "ex gentibus"*, represented as twin founders of the early Church, the Papacy. They were designed to cover the lower walls of the Sistine Chapel, below the frescoes depicting the Life of Moses and the Life of Christ created during the period of Pope Sixtus IV (1471- 1484).

The first delivery of seven of these magnificent works of art, made of wool, silk and gold and silver thread, were displayed in the Sistine Chapel for Christmas 1519, while the remaining three tapestries reached the Vatican in 1521.

The tapestries were used to embellish the Sistine Chapel on the occasion of ceremonies of great solemnity. Through the centuries they have been on display inside the Vatican Apostolic Palace as well as being used in the Procession of *Corpus Domini*. The tapestries have been the object, since 1983, of careful examination and restoration carried out by the Vatican Museums. The exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum will offer the opportunity of admiring the tapestries now restored to their original beauty.

Before the tapestries head for London, for this once in a lifetime event, the Vatican Museums are holding a press conference in the Sala Regia in the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

Following the press conference visitors are invited to enjoy the privilege, for one evening only, of admiring Raphael's tapestries displayed in their original sixteenth century location. A visit to the Sistine Chapel on this occasion will be a unique and memorable experience.