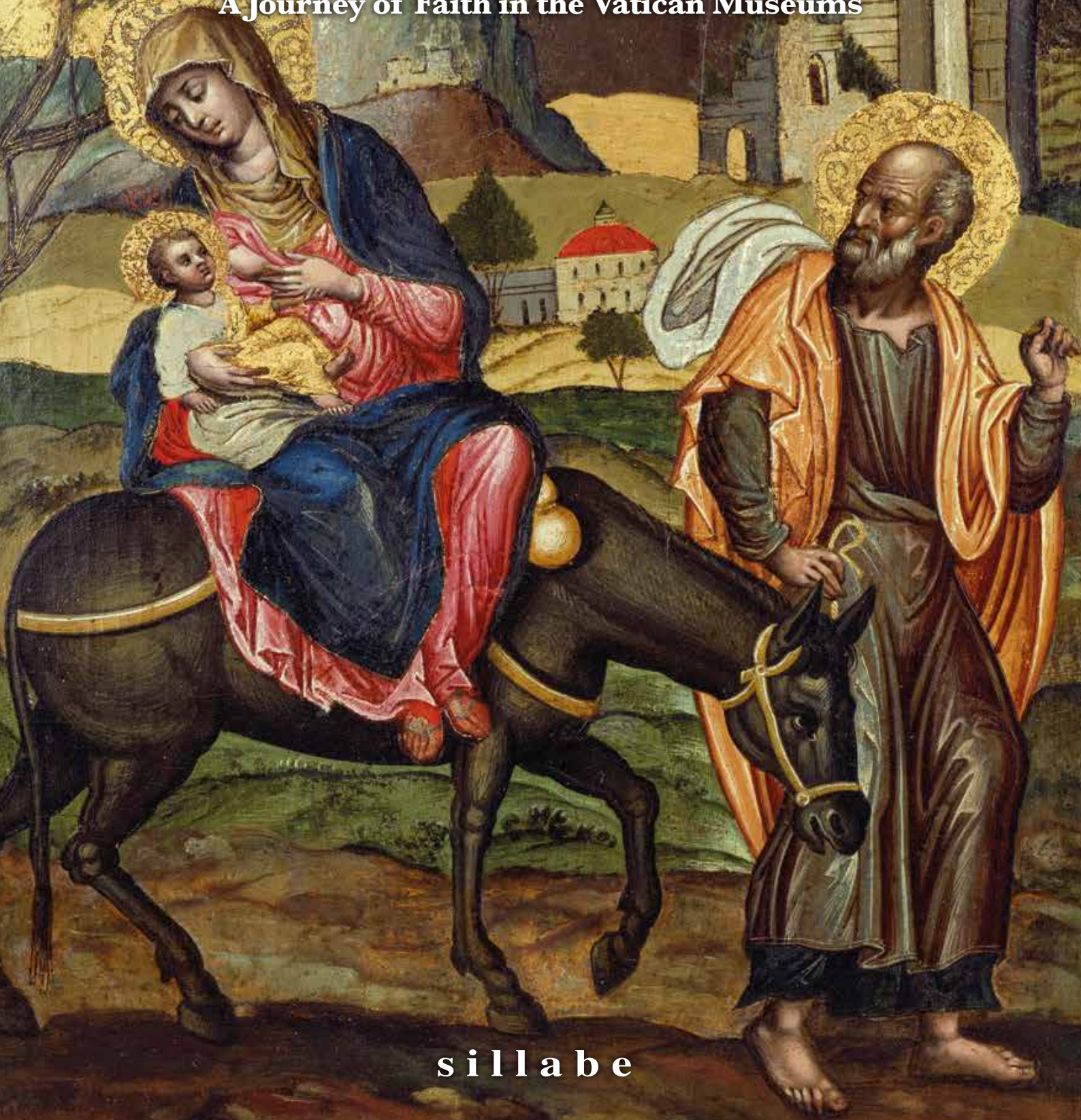


ICONS OF HOPE

A Journey of Faith in the Vatican Museums



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edited by

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s i l l a b e



The Holy Year we are about to live is full of expectations and hopes, especially for peace, repeatedly invoked by the Holy Father, and the city of Rome opens its doors to crowds of pilgrims of all nationalities and languages, like so many other times in its millennial history.

Welcome is the word that, perhaps better than others, expresses the challenge that the Vatican Museums are preparing to accept, and, at the same time, reveals the desire underlying the creation of this small but precious exhibition.

For the first time the sacristy of the ancient Roman church of Sant'Agnese in Agone will host part of a special collection, that of the icons of the Vatican Museums. This particular type of sacred artwork, painted as a form of prayer, intended for personal devotion or public worship, is deeply rooted in the history of Christianity and the Byzantine tradition. Icons were – and still are – blessed, censed, and venerated; therefore, their connection with the liturgy and the faithful is very strong. Iconographers and monks painted them as the fruit of their contemplation and prayer, in ancient times as well as today. The religious value of which they are an expression, from the earliest stages of their creation, distinguishes them from other works of art and makes them worthy of special attention.

For this reason, we have gladly accepted the urging of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for Fundamental Questions of Evangelization in the World, to select for the exhibition



eighteen precious icons, not just those visible in the exhibition halls, but also, in some cases, usually kept in storage. These icons, of different forms and materials, collected in dedicated showcases and arranged in the prestigious space designed by Borromini, illustrate characters and scenes from the life of Jesus, Mary, and the saints. They are, for the most part, works of art studied by the Department of Byzantine - Medieval Art and recently restored thanks to the efforts of the professionals in the Painting and Wooden Materials Restoration Laboratory and the Metal and Ceramics Restoration Laboratory, analyzed in studies made by the Cabinet of Scientific Research.

Special thanks go to Anna Pizzamano and Pietro Beresh, curators of the exhibition, for the passion with which they have undertaken this Jubilee project, which is also a testimony to the teamwork of many departments of the Vatican Museums: the Exhibitions Office, the Logistics Section, the Conservator's Office and the Secretariats.

The icons on display speak to us from the different geographical areas of the Christian East where they originated. They are a sign of welcome for every pilgrim who has the opportunity to admire them and to recognize themselves in them through the journey of a shared faith.

Barbara Jatta

Director of the Vatican Museums