

The SCRIBE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HERITAGE EDITION —
THE FINE ART EDITION OF THE SAINT JOHN'S BIBLE

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His Holiness Pope Francis Receives Final Volume of *The Saint John's Bible* at the Vatican

The final volume of *The Saint John's Bible* was presented to His Holiness Pope Francis by the Papal Foundation and Saint John's University on April 17. As Pope Francis saw the illumination portraying the heavenly Jerusalem, he raised his hands motioning in praise, blessing, and thanksgiving. The illumination from *Letters and Revelation* shows the fulfillment of the Old Testament's prophecy that the gates never close and the heavenly Jerusalem is open to all people of every nation.

The presentation occurred at the Vatican during the annual meeting of the Papal Foundation. The Holy Father received *Letters and Revelation*, the last completed volume of the St. Peter Apostles Edition of *The Saint John's Bible*, signed and authenticated by Donald Jackson, the Bible's artistic director.

"Pope Francis lifted his hands with a smile on his face in a gesture of joy and appreciation. It was wonderful," said Abbot John Klassen, OSB, of Saint John's Abbey.

In addition to the "Vision of the New Jerusalem," Donald Jackson, Abbot John and Michael Hemesath, president of Saint John's University, also showed him the last page of *Revelation* with "The Great Amen," the final illumination and words of *The Saint John's Bible*.

"He began to sense the beauty of the illuminations and Illustrations," said Jackson. The presentation that day was a singular event in the project's history as *Letters and Revelation* was the final volume to be completed. "The whole point of this Bible was to ignite the spiritual imagination," Jackson said. "Now it's just beginning its work. My part is finished, but the Bible itself will now carry on to reach out to others."

Letters and Revelation, which is approximately 2 feet tall by 3 feet wide when open and weighs about 14 pounds, is characterized by rich illuminations of some of the most dramatic and influential passages of all of Sacred Scripture. St. Paul's and other authors' words are the oldest Christian documents on record.



Saint John's Abbot John Klassen, President Michael Hemesath, Donald Jackson, and Dan and Katharine Whalen present the Letters & Revelation volume of the Apostles Edition to His Holiness, Pope Francis I.

Photo © L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

The St. Peter Apostles Edition of *The Saint John's Bible* was a gift to the Holy See from the Papal Foundation through the generosity of the Gerald and Henrietta Rauenhorst Foundation. "In 2008 our family had the privilege to present the first volume of the Apostles Edition to Pope Benedict," said Judy Rauenhorst Doerr, board member of the Papal Foundation and daughter of the late Gerald and Henrietta Rauenhorst. "Now, seven years later, Pope Francis is being presented the seventh volume of this remarkable spiritual and artistic masterpiece. It is the fulfillment of our family's long-standing dream."

The St. Peter Apostles Edition is beautifully bound in seven volumes. To date, three of the 12 Apostles Edition have been acquired. Besides the St. Peter Apostle Edition at the Vatican, one set is at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City; and the third is owned by a family. 



A Vatican II Pilgrim and His Bible

Bishop Remi de Roo is the one of the last living Second Vatican Council Fathers. He was appointed a bishop of Victoria, Canada, by Pope John XXIII and summoned almost immediately to the Vatican Council in October 1962. His episcopate focused on implementing the vision presented by the Council and sharing the good news in what has been called his “people of God” theology. As a Canadian bishop, he insisted that the Church belongs to all of its members, not just the hierarchy, and worked to empower lay people.

For his 90th birthday, he asked for a Bible. As he told a reporter for the *Vancouver Sun* in 2014, “Several friends have already asked me, ‘What would you like for your birthday?’ I invariably say, ‘a new Bible.’ But not just any Bible.” The Bible he requested, and received, was a Heritage Edition of *The Saint John’s Bible*.

Bishop Remi recognized in *The Saint John’s Bible* not just an exquisite work of art, but also a powerful expression of core truths in the Bible. His own theology resonates with the theme of “justice for God’s people,” which includes illuminations

and text treatments emphasizing the directive to care for the disenfranchised, the preferential option for the poor. The images drawn from modern scientific discovery — DNA, viruses, and images from satellites and the Hubble telescope — powerfully bring the Bible into a discussion with science. It is a Bible engaged with reading “the signs of the times.”

At age 91, the retired bishop continues to speak on topics related to the Second Vatican Council. He says, “My pilgrimage these last few years has been one of lecturing, mainly on Vatican II, of ministering, of giving retreats and of contemplating the signs of the times in the light of Sacred Scripture and our rich Tradition.”

Bishop de Roo’s Heritage Edition, some volumes of which were known to reside for a time under Bishop Remi’s bed, are now safely housed at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) at the University of Victoria. They have been used in the ordination of Canadian bishops, at the center of symposia and discussions at the CSRS, and on display at the Cathedral and other sites in the diocese. 🏠

Interview with Bishop Remi de Roo

Q: How does *The Saint John's Bible* complement the Vatican II vision of the Bible?

A: Vatican II looked at the issue of revelation and got beyond the ancient quarrel over who could read and interpret the scriptures to assert that revelation is the living person of Jesus Christ. This was a whole new attitude, a reclaiming of the ancient tradition. The work of art which is *The Saint John's Bible* is a beautiful illustration of that insight.

Q: Are there particular illuminations that speak to you?

A: There are so many, I wouldn't be able to choose just one. I appreciate the "Genealogy" page in Matthew because of its inclusiveness, beginning with the menorah. The women's names are there and all the characters in the story, and the use of Arabic and inclusion of Hagar. I also think the illumination for the Beatitudes is quite beautiful. I find the deep blue colors used throughout *The Saint John's Bible* quite inspiring.

Q: What is your hope for *The Saint John's Bible* at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Society (CSRS) in Vancouver?

A: The CSRS is an interfaith venture aimed at promoting discussion between all religions and faith traditions. *The Saint John's Bible* appeals to people of all religions through its beauty and magnificent calligraphy. It is a wonderful instrument for interfaith and interdisciplinary discussion, not just for people of many faiths but also artists, writers, and others. All people share in common that we respond to beauty and truth and goodness. *The Saint John's Bible* appeals to everyone through its beauty.



Upon seeing Bishop Remi de Roo's Council Fathers ring, His Holiness Pope Francis I stops to greet the retired bishop from Victoria.

The CSRS is working now to acquire documents from numerous religious traditions and to engage people with those texts through its series "Found in Translation." *The Saint John's Bible* will continue to be part of those discussions and continue to touch the lives of many people regardless of their religious persuasion.

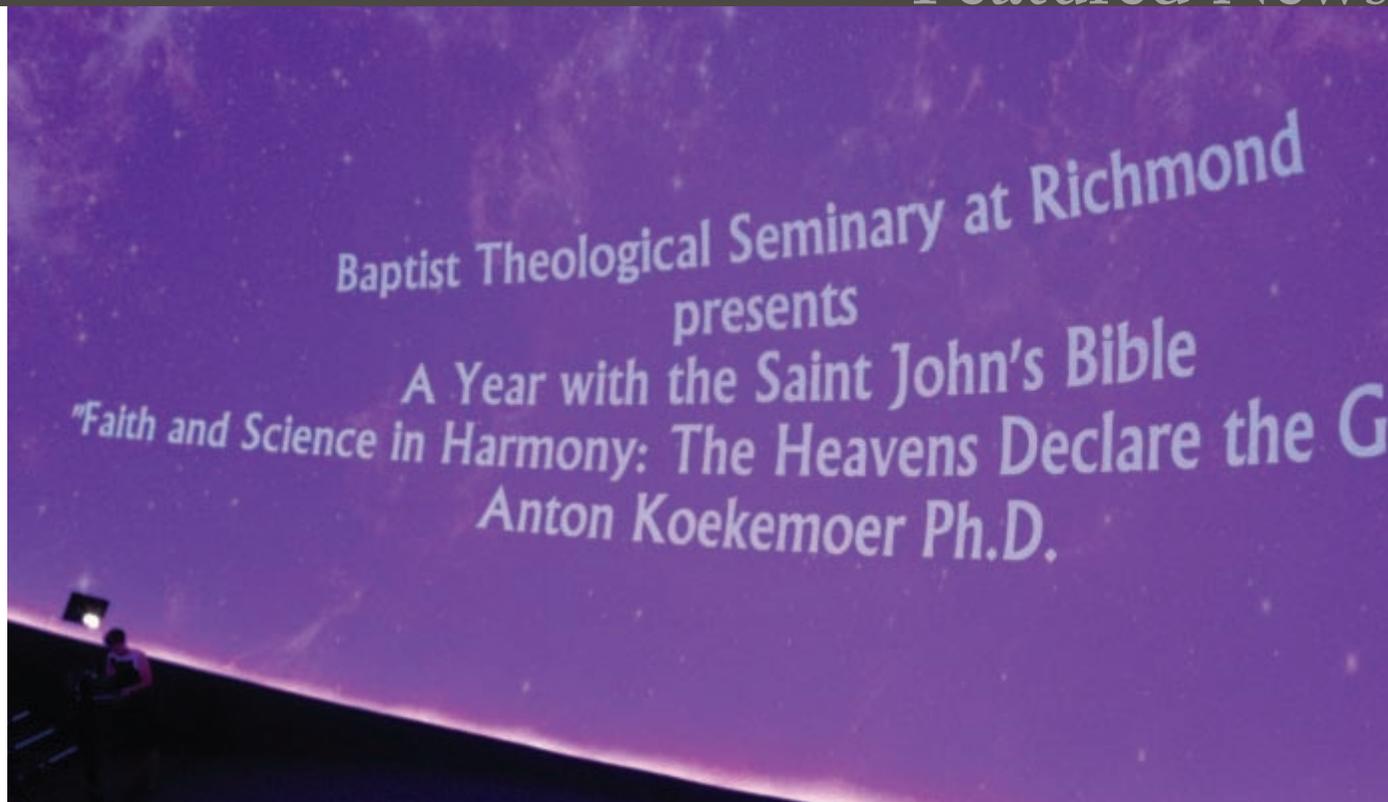
Q: How has *The Saint John's Bible* been received in Victoria?

A: It has been received with great enthusiasm! On September 20, 2014 we presented it to the University of Victoria at St. Andrew's Cathedral and invited the public. All seven volumes were displayed and we had volunteer page turners so people could see as much as possible. I remember particularly the statement from one person who helped with some of the administrative work related to the event. This was a person of no religious faith who said, "Having looked at *The Saint John's Bible* I have a deep feeling within me that there's got to be something more." This person sensed from the Bible that there are more profound and beautiful things in the world. That has stayed with me.

The Saint John's Bible speaks to all human beings who respond to beauty and truth and goodness and the pursuit of justice and peace. These things are a foundational attraction for humans. The Bible becomes an instrument of communication between people who love beauty and truth and the pursuit of justice and peace. It is also, because of this, a wonderful tool for discussions with young people. The inspirational power of contemporary art is greater than black-and-white words on a page. People respond to the beauty they find there.

Q: What are your hopes for Pope Francis in the life of the Church?

A: Pope Francis impressed me very deeply right from the beginning, when in his first public appearance he asked the people to pray for him and described himself as the Bishop of Rome. That showed he understood that he had a diocese of his own, as well as being a symbol of vision and unity for the Church throughout the world. He has struck me as a true pastor. He has gone to the level of the people and invited the poor to dine with him and washed their feet. This is the living message of what Christianity is all about. 🙏



Have Bible, Will Travel

For Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in Virginia (BTSR), the year with *The Saint John's Bible* has been a wonderful ecumenical experience and a chance to engage people throughout the region with the Heritage Edition of *The Saint John's Bible*. Since its arrival in August 2014, the Bible has already reached 1,900 people off campus and 1,500 people on campus — a lot of contact for a school with a current enrollment of 75-80 students. Project director, Dr. Tracy Hartman, notes that faculty, staff, students and volunteer docents have all joined together to make the exhibit a success.

One highlight of the year was an October event with astrophysicist Anton Koekemoer at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond. BTSR and Bon Secours Health System cosponsored the IMAX presentation to a capacity crowd titled “Science and Faith in Harmony: The Heavens Declare the Glory of God.”

According to Hartman, “Dr. Koekemoer projected images from the Hubble telescope on the IMAX dome to illustrate the scope of the universe and all that astronomers have been finding in deep space. He included descriptions of the universe from Scripture, including Psalms and Job, using the calligraphic texts from *The Saint John's Bible*. He also showed how images from the Hubble telescope were used in illuminations, including the frontispiece of John and ‘To the

Ends of the Earth’ in Acts. He placed the actual Hubble images over the illuminations.”

“Then, just when we were feeling very small in a massive universe, he pointed to the unique relationship between humans and God. Humanity plays a unique and important role in Creation and we matter to God in a special way. This point relates to a key theme in *The Saint John's Bible*. We are created in God's image and as such we are creative beings. The creation of *The Saint John's Bible* is itself an attempt to reflect the beauty of God's creation and God's word. The purpose is to engage us in deeper understanding of that unique relationship where we are able to hold the vastness of the universe and our own special place in it simultaneously.”

Hartman said this year her motto has been: “Have Bible, will travel.” She and BTSR's team of docents have taken *The Saint John's Bible* to churches, conferences, medical centers, universities, assisted living centers and Rotary Clubs. “It has been a great ecumenical experience,” she said, relating a possible headline for one such event: “Baptist Seminary brings Catholic Bible to Jewish Community Center.”

“What a joy it has been,” said Hartman of having the Heritage Edition at BTSR. “It has had a huge impact on our small seminary community. We are so grateful to be trusted with the Heritage Edition and to be able to bring it to so many people.” 📖

First Person

Mark Ross is a music/horn and computer science double major at Berea College in Kentucky. This March he participated in an essay contest at Berea in conjunction with their exhibit of *The Saint John's Bible* Heritage Edition. The essays were part of "March Mindfulness," an alternative to NCAA basketball "March Madness." Mark is originally from Wayne, West Virginia, and will graduate in December 2015. We asked him how he got involved with *The Saint John's Bible* at Berea.



Mark Ross

"My experience with The Saint John's Bible began in the summer of 2014 when Rev. Dr. Gail Bowman revealed it to some of the student chaplains, teaching us how to turn pages and some general knowledge about the project. After much study, practice, and a few more lessons, I was granted the opportunity to share the Bible's story with my home church. Sharing with the congregation and letting the words and illuminations speak to them, I saw people walk away with a greater appreciation for the Word of God; and I saw the joy and creativity in the eyes of the children as they saw the beauty of the illuminations. It was truly inspiring, indeed!"

Here is Mark's essay, also on display in the library at Berea College, a reflection on "Peter's Confession" from the Gospel of Matthew.

This world is full of sorrow and pain beyond measure: people are killed daily, addictions rage in our people; families are turned against themselves and community torn by strife; depression is deep, and sometimes the joys are shallow. Hearing only the sorrows of this world day in and day out pains my heart in many ways. This illumination reminds me of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53, one of the most poignant proclamations of the coming Messiah, says that he was beaten, bruised, and whipped for our sins, our mistakes, and also our healing. Because Jesus was obedient, even to a death on the cross, we can be healed, both spiritually and physically. Seeing the image of the AIDS virus in the corner with the pagan gods, and other darkness, reminds me how strong the light of God is. Jesus' death means full and complete healing, even from something as horrifying and terrible as AIDS. And while God has a plan for what is miraculously healed on this earth, we know too that the greatest healing of all is with our relationship with God. That relationship leads to peace everlasting: no pain, sorrow, grief, or death. Hallelujah.

Paul said that if our hope in Christ is in this world alone, we should be, of all people, the most sorrowful; but our hope lies not in this world, but in one coming where neither moth corrupts, nor death has any hold. We will no longer weep for the pains and horrors committed on our brothers and sisters. We'll bask in the radiance of God's glory as we will talk to Jesus face to face. We'll finally rest in the relationship humanity was made for, one that was remade through and by Jesus.



THE LISTENERS

One of the things I have enjoyed in *The Saint John's Bible* from my earliest experience with it is the presence of listeners. These are characters we see from behind as their attention is focused on God.

The first listeners I encountered when writing *Art of The Saint John's Bible* was in the illumination of Luke's Parables. The left page contains images related to five parables. But the illumination spills over onto the right page, to show Martha and Mary listening to Jesus tell the parables. Jesus is a gold figure, God's truth shining through the words he speaks.

It's pretty easy to tell Mary and Martha apart. Mary sits and gazes up at Jesus. Martha stands, her hands on her hips, as if she's just come from the kitchen. Donald Jackson has painted her a skirt that is both jaunty and apron-like. But she, too, looks at the gold figure of Jesus and listens. I am always taken by Martha's beauty.

Later in Luke's gospel is the illumination of "The Road to Emmaus." At the bottom of the page are the backs of the two men who met Jesus on the road but only recognized him when he broke bread with them. They have been excitedly telling the story of the crucifixion and resurrection, but now they sit under a tree receiving instruction. On the top half of the illumination are the same two figures, again with their backs to us, facing Jesus. But this time they are listening to Jesus as he prays and breaks bread. This time they recognize what is being revealed to them and to us in the etched gold face of the Risen Christ.

The first word in the Rule of St. Benedict is "Listen!" This word is highlighted in *The Saint John's Bible*. And it's true, so many of the best characters in the Bible find their greatness in listening. When we read the Bible we look over their shoulders and listen to what is being revealed, God and God's relationship with us. ☸

[Susan Sink is the author of *Art of The Saint John's Bible*.]



Susan Sink



Road to Emmaus, Donald Jackson, *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Minnesota USA.



ESSEN UND FRESSEN

The Bavarian monks who founded Saint John's Abbey would be pleased to see the title of this essay if for no other reason than to know their native tongue is still somewhat in use 158 years after they broke ground in Minnesota. My mother, Gertrude, who recently passed away at age 96, also would have been happy to see the German phrase, because she felt guilty that none of her children learned the language her parents spoke across the kitchen table.

I first learned the difference between these German words from John Sisk, my college English professor. On the surface, they both mean "to eat." But if you dig a little deeper you will learn that "essen" is better defined by the verb, "to dine," whereas "fressen" means "to feed on" or "to devour," much the way livestock eat. In other words, humans *essen* and animals *fressen*. No doubt my grandmother sometimes encouraged her children, shoveling their food at that dining table and eager to get back outside, to "essen, nicht fressen!"

These German words come to mind as I watch people — especially students — seemingly transfixed by *The Saint John's Bible* Heritage Edition. Institutions around the world are savoring *The Saint John's Bible* Heritage Edition in worship, classrooms, and exhibitions.

Regis College at University of Toronto has made it a practice to turn a page of their Heritage Edition volume

every day. Many at the college have made a stop at the Bible a daily ritual. Dean Scott Nelson told me a regular visitor complained recently when the page was not turned from the day before. Nelson considered that a good sign!

This generation lives in a world of texts, Snapchats, and Tweets, all convenient ways to communicate, but eaten quickly, hurriedly consumed. There are times when it is nice — necessary actually — to sit down and savor a meal.

The Most Reverend Rowan Williams, retired Archbishop of Canterbury, recognized the opportunity presented by *The Saint John's Bible* Heritage Edition when he wrote: "We tend to read greedily, as we do so many other things; this beautiful text shows us a better way. This project not only revives the ancient tradition of the church sponsoring creative arts, it also offers an insight into that lost skill of patient and prayerful reading."

Saint John's would like to give your community the opportunity to experience this "better way." We invite you to acquire the Heritage Edition or to participate in our *Year With The Saint John's Bible* program. Please call the program office at (320) 363-2611 or email us at kwerlinger@csbsju.edu for more information.

Danke schön und guten Appetit! 🍷

[Jim Triggs is the executive director of the Heritage Program.]

To see a complete listing of
Saint John's Bible events, visit:
saintjohnsbible.org and click
on "See the Bible."

You can also follow the
journey of *The Saint John's
Bible* on Facebook, Twitter and
YouTube. Regular updates,
advance notices of new
publications and photos of new
illuminations can all be found
on these social media sites.



The Saint John's Bible at Molloy College in Rockville Centre, NY



"A college can easily spend \$200,000 or more for a chemistry lab or physics lab. I view The Saint John's Bible as a lab for the humanities, an investment that will appreciate over time."

— DREW BOGNER, PH.D.,
PRESIDENT, MOLLOY COLLEGE