

THE Pontificia Università di
San Tommaso d'Aquino
Summer 2022

ANGELICUM

Roman Garden





THE ANGELICUM

A newsletter for friends & alumni of
The Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas

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garden team

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“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Gen. 2:7-9

Cover: Angelicum garden's new statue of St. Dominic de Guzman

Left: Pakistani friars overlook the Angelicum garden from the convent.

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1) Fr. Thomas Joseph discusses with Sr. Helen in the university cloister garden.

2) Historic fountain (now niche) restored in garden.

3) Dr. Donna McDonald

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The Garden of our Redemption



Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P.

At the Easter Vigil, the pinnacle of the Church's liturgical year, we hear the words sung by the light of the Easter candle, "O happy fault, o necessary sin of Adam." That fault is the Original Sin in the Garden of Eden, a happy fault because it "gained for us so great a Redeemer." In such a way, God's plan for the Incarnation and the salvation of the world began to unfold, and all this began in a Garden.

Here at the Angelicum, which is simultaneously both a university and a convent of friars, we have our own large garden. This garden is built around a large cloister walkway and was part of the monastery for the cloistered nuns who lived here. Such a garden is normal for a monastery, but is quite unique in the heart of historic Rome. With roses, irises, and a wide variety of fruit and nut trees including walnut, pistachio, cherry, lemon and other citrus fruits, this garden is an ornamental oasis overlooking the Roman Forum.

There are various sections of the garden - an area for the students, and another where the friars go to relax, study, meditate and pray the Rosary. Indeed, it is a place where friars and students alike can engage in theological speculation, pray and contemplate, or simply spend time conversing with each other. Our renovated garden reminds us of how, even after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, all things would eventually be restored by Christ.

A garden is a theological place because the original Garden of Eden was given by God to Adam and Eve at the beginning of the Bible. There Adam and Eve were blessed in every way. There they had received all they needed in this world. Thomas Aquinas calls this state before the Fall, "Original Justice." And it was there also, unfortunately, where they were tempted by the devil in a desire to know all things - in disobedience to God.

"O happy fault, o necessary sin of Adam." So why would the Church, in her liturgy, say this about original sin? Under Divine Providence, and because of that original sin, God sends his Son into the world, and salvation visits us like the dawn from on high (cf. Lk 1:78).

Only through Jesus, the New Adam, can the old Adam be saved - so serious was the original transgression. Nevertheless it is the "happy fault" because through Christ, we die and rise with him, and are thus transformed.

After Baptism, the human soul is elevated and given a supernatural ability to know and love God in a way that was impossible previously. Adam and Eve had a graced existence before the Fall, and now we, who are baptized, are made adopted children of God and find ourselves in a better position than before the Fall. The mystery of sin has been turned upside down allowing us to enter into an interpersonal relationship with God - all because of Jesus.

Even though original sin has been washed away, God allows the effect of



original sin to remain, so that we never sin again in the same way. The graced existence we now enjoy has rescued us from the Garden of this world and set us on the journey towards the eternal Garden of the Kingdom of God - all the while, making us more fully who we truly are, more fully human, and alive to God in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 6:8-10).

Many of our readers have gardens, and we hope this issue might inspire you to meditate on God's gift of life and the blessings we have received through the gift of creation. May our University continue to be a place of inspiration and contemplation, both inside and outside the classroom, a place to think and meditate on God and his son, Jesus Christ. And may the Angelicum garden be a source of inspiration for generations to come!

If you would like to contribute to the ongoing maintenance of the Angelicum Gardens you might consider a monthly donation or include the Angelicum as a legacy in your estate planning.



Tawny Owl - *Strix aluco*




Eurasian Hoopoe - *Upupa epops*



Historic fountain (now niche) restored

Angelicum garden

By the numbers



5 garden areas, including the Convent garden (a place set aside for the friars of the Angelicum convent), the library rose garden, Soria Fountain garden, the cloister garden, and at the entrance of the University

The convent garden includes:

68 trees, including 7 Loquat, 3 Walnut, 1 Plum, 2 Pomegranate, 2 Kakis, 1 Mulberry, 2 Pistachios (very old trees, which are rarely found in Rome), 1 Sorbo (a plant that usually grows at higher elevations) along with many lemon, mandarin and orange trees.

8 new fruit trees, including Grapefruit, Kumquat, Bergamot, and Sweet osmanthus

2 areas for cultivation, where the friars currently grow tomatoes and hot peppers

13 kinds of bee friendly plants and flowers, including Lavender, Rosemary, Gaura (Beeblossom), Echinacea, Agapanthus (African Lily), Giant Garlic, Cosmos, Sanguisorba (Burnet) and Loropetalum

A Word From the Garden

“In the center of Rome, it is something very special to have a garden like this one. Donna felt it was her mission to restore this garden, not only for the Dominican brothers, but also for the city itself. It is a green lung within the heart of the historic center, a gem for the city and also for the Dominican community of the university. It is meant to be a small paradise within these walls and it is important to continue to beautify the garden, also in recognition of the dignity which is proper to such a space. With the team we have assembled and the resources provided, we have been able to make this a reality. For me, it was an honor to work on this garden.”

- Rosita, Landscape Designer and Gardener

The “Karol Wojtyla” olive tree under which the Angelicum’s most distinguished alumnus was known to study.



Pink Garland (*Daphne cneorum*)



ANGELICUM



New mosaic on garden wall.

Alumni Return

THEIR ROMAN ALMA MATER FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AT JOHN PAUL II CENTER

BY ELENA DINI

After two years of pandemic-related travel restrictions, thirty-nine Angelicum alumni who actively promote discourse between Christian, Jewish, Islamic and other religious traditions in their respective countries, were once again welcomed by the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue. From May 3rd to 6th 2022, alumni from nineteen countries (Albania, Bangladesh, Canada, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Sri Lanka, UK, Ukraine, United States, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe) gathered for an intensive programme of academic formation which began with a memorable meeting with Pope Francis during his weekly Wednesday audience.

Graduates of the John Paul II Center attended a public conference at the Angelicum entitled “Interreligious Dialogue: from the University to the Field”. One of the conference sessions, moderated by Elena Dini, Senior Program Manager of the Center, included Imam Yahya Pallavicini of COREIS (La Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana), Professor Gavin D’Costa, Chair of Catholic Theology at the University of Bristol, and Professor Adam Afterman, Chair of Jewish Philosophy at Tel Aviv University and Director of the John Paul II Center. These guest speakers discussed the importance of interreligious dialogue in academia and various methodologies for teaching and studying inter-religious dialogue at the university level. In a second session, the John Paul II leaders had the opportunity to share their experiences of interreligious dialogue in each of their respective countries. Discussions continued in workshops which the John Paul II leaders organised in conjunction with partner institutions.

One of the Angelicum workshops, “The Good Samaritan: Living Interreligious Dialogue in Today’s World”, was jointly presented by Sister Gracy Vadakara, Delegate Superior of the Daughters of the Church in India, and Gianluca Avanzato, a Masters of Divinity candidate at Harvard University. Sr. Gracy and Gianluca are just two of the many highly motivated students which the John Paul II Center has welcomed to Rome over the past fourteen years. Some of these students have remained at the University to pursue further studies in interreligious dialogue, including Fr. Mak Caesar Abagna from Ghana, and Fr. Emmanuel Aguiyi from Nigeria, both of whom recently defended their doctoral dissertations. Another Angelicum alumnus who returned for the conference was Msgr. John Bogna Bakeni, who was ordained auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Maiduguri, Nigeria on July 7th. In the course of a recent [interview with EWTN](#) he stressed the important role which the John Paul II Center plays in ensuring that students of inter-faith dialogue are “better prepared, equipped with the tools, and given the space” to implement what they have learned.



Alumni with Pope Francis during the general audience
May 4, 2022. © GENNARI



Dr. Donna McDonald and Rosita Castro

A Garden Revival

The popular phrase, “the things that we love tell us what we are” might characterize those who began the project of the Angelicum gardens renovation some three years ago. Dr. Donna McDonald had the project’s vision while working closely with the friars of the Angelicum. Under what she describes as Divine Providence, she rallied an expert team, including Roman landscape designer, Rosita Castro. Rosita, originally from Chile, brought expertise that reaches far beyond horticulture. She has become “the creative problem solver,” and has designed the flower beds, pergolas and artistic placement of new vegetation and trees. Rosita has been working in landscape design for more than 10 years, in countries from Albania to England. In the words of Donna, “This garden [restoration] would not have happened without Rosita.” The team also included an agronomist from Rome’s botanical gardens, an art restorationist, an architect, a construction team, and an assistant for logistics.

Donna came to know the Dominican friars through her parish priest in Miami. In July 2019, Father Gabriel Vigues encouraged her to visit the Angelicum gardens - considered the largest private garden within the historic center of Rome. Two days later with introductions to the Dominican community, Donna was on a plane to Italy where she found the perfect opportunity to get her hands dirty (so to speak) with work in the Angelicum's garden while attending classes in theology.

Located on the Quirinale Hill, the smallest of the seven hills of Rome, the Angelicum garden offers some of the best views of the Basilica of St. Mary Major and the Vittoriano monument in Piazza Venezia. "The project was one way to honor my late husband, George, not only by the donation, but also by growing in my faith. I had set some long-term goals for myself when my husband was sick; among them, finding a way to serve others and learning a new language (I later decided on Italian). With this adventure, I have been able to do both, and also make many new friends."

As she began to consider what a full restoration of the Angelicum's convent garden might entail, Donna quickly realized that the project would involve more than simply planting a few flowers. Of the five separate garden within the University complex, Donna focussed her attention on the largest, a walled area covering two acres, with upper and lower gardens, which overlooks the Roman Forum.

Several infrastructural improvements were necessary, such as the construction of railings along the walkway, a new underground automatic watering system, underground electrical wiring for lighting, and new roofs, gutters, doors and windows for the 1,000 year old historic sheds running along the garden's south wall. The boundary walls of the garden, having tolerated decades of intense Roman heat, were also showing signs of significant deterioration. It was necessary to strip the wall back to its original masonry and discard the flaking and cracked plasterwork. The wall was re-finished with a material which will withstand extremes of weather for another

hundred years and then painted in a color which is sympathetic to the garden's ancient setting. Other improvements included the preparation of beds for growing peppers (a well-known hobby of Fr. Marco Salvati, O.P.) and other vegetables. The project also included the creation of a new rose garden in a sunny and well drained location beside the Angelicum library reading room - a sight that will certainly inspire scholars.

Undoubtedly the most important element of the garden's restoration was the rejuvenation of the seventy fruit trees through a process of careful and selective pruning. "The health of the trees is the important part, because the garden of a monastery is for the purpose of food; a medieval garden was to provide food for those who lived there," remarked Donna. Among the garden team was a qualified arborist, Stefano Marzullo, who assessed the health of the trees, before carrying out rounds of pruning, cleaning, and deinfestation. Through the use of delicate cultivation techniques, the grape vines, which had been dormant for years, were successfully revived. The results were already evident by early summer when each of the trees began to blossom. The visible impact was striking to everyone, including the students.

As every tree speaks about the history of its surrounding space, and those who have lived there; each one deserves a special kind of care. For this, it was necessary for an in-depth knowledge of each individual species, particularly the rare ones found in the garden. For example, there are the two pistachio trees; even the agronomist was puzzled when he first saw them, and noted that they are probably over half a century old. "Every time I think of the garden, I think of the pistachio trees," said Donna. "I had never seen one before, and so I would never have guessed what fruit it was."

There are countless challenges associated with a project of this kind. Obtaining the preliminary permission of the civic authorities to commence the renovation work was a major task alone. Donna commented, "No matter where you live, you always have to deal with the departments which grant permits. Imagine, doing this in the historic center of Rome, in a place right next to the



Dr. Donna McDonald with new statue of St. Dominic

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

-Genesis 2:15

Roman Forum! For good reason, I think, they are very specific in what you must do.” Despite the challenges, Donna navigated the team through Italian regulations and processes, working closely with the friars. Donna’s experience as a former executive with Johnson and Johnson equipped her with the determination and flexibility for organizing and keeping the project on track.

Thanks to the Angelicum team, one of the most unique gardens in the historic center of Rome has been faithfully preserved. Donna is grateful because, “Here many priests walk around these pathways and pray the Rosary. Some come to study; some come just to relax and meditate.” And so, for the garden of this religious community, the commissioning of a new mosaic of Our Lady of the Rosary designed by Fr. Marcelo Solorzano, O.P. and the erection of a new statue of St. Dominic were two important elements of the project. Paola Marra, an art restorationist, created piece by piece, the beautiful mosaic and further enhanced the garden by restoring the nicchia (a former historic fountain) back to its original colors of the 1600’s. Thanks to everyone involved, the garden will remain a special space to inspire many for generations to come.

The Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas would like to renovate other sections of the Angelicum gardens in the coming years. As you can imagine, it requires monthly ongoing attention to maintain the health and beauty of the garden. Would you like to assist with these projects? No contribution is too small. Consider making a monthly donation or a bequest for the Angelicum gardens!

credit: Fr. Tomasz Podlewski



Rare Pistachio tree



SNAPSHOTS FROM THE GARDEN

These birds have all recently been seen in the Angelicum gardens.
Special thanks to Fr. Albert Trudel, O.P., Thomistic Institute Study Abroad Program Director



Wood Warbler
Phylloscopus sibilatrix



European Starling
Sturnus vulgaris



Hooded Crow
Corvus cornix



Rose-ringed Parakeet
Psittacula krameri



Peregrine Falcon
Falco peregrinus



Eurasian Blackbird
Turdus merula



Ring-billed Gull
Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae scopulinus



Green Finch
Chloris chloris



Black Redstart
Phoenicurus ochruros

THE MATER ECCLESIAE

HIGHER INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Mater Ecclesiae Institute is a school of theological formation linked to the Angelicum's four faculties of Theology, Philosophy, Canon Law, and Social Sciences. The Institute awards Baccalaureate and Licentiate degrees which cover diverse areas of study including pedagogical methods, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, liturgical and pastoral ministry, as well as the theology of healthcare. These degrees are jointly recognised by the Holy See and the Italian state. In addition to these courses, Mater Ecclesiae Institute offers a diploma program for religious educators and formators. This program which focuses on Spirituality, Christian Anthropology, and Psychology can be taken over one or two years. Students of the Institute also have the opportunity to explore the artistic expression of the Christian faith through various courses such as "The Bible and Music", "Christ in the Cinema", and "The Bible and Art".

The Mater Ecclesiae Institute was founded by the Venerable Luigia Tincani, an Italian philosopher and teacher who was born in Chieti on 25 March 1889. A Third Order Dominican, Tincani also established the Union of St. Catherine of Siena in 1917 when she and her companions consecrated themselves to the apostolate of education as they were gathered in prayer in St Dominic's cell in Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill. Inspired by Tincani, this group of teachers and students were convinced that they could carry out an effective educational apostolate according to the Dominican charism. In their

commitment to missionary activity in state schools, Tincani and her collaborators had the active support of the then Master of the Dominican Order, Fr. Ludwig Theissling, O.P. Pope Pius XI gave formal approbation to this apostolate in 1923 and gave the group the new name of the Union of School Missionaries.

Luigia Tincani died on the 31 May 1976 and is buried in Santa Maria sopra Minerva. While her mortal remains rest beside those of her patroness, St. Catherine of Siena, her work of providing cultural and professional training for religious women continues at the Angelicum. During her lifetime the Venerable Luigia had recognised the need for an academy which would provide women religious with superior intellectual and cultural formation, enabling them to augment the educational standards of Catholic schools administered by these sisters. To this end, she founded the Mater Ecclesiae Institute under the original title of "Scuola Superiore di Studi Religiosi e Sociali per Universitarie" which became an entity of the Angelicum in 1964.

In recent years the Mater Ecclesiae Institute has expanded its outreach and now welcomes students from a variety of backgrounds, including lay students. Today there are over one hundred and fifty students from all over the world registered at the Angelicum's Institute. The Institute's director, Fr. Marco Salvati, O.P., is assisted by Alessandra Valentini who has acted as secretary to the Institute for over thirty years.

The students of Mater Ecclesiae can best describe the value of their studies. One of these is Fulvio Napoli, a layman who carried out his studies while continuing his professional career. When asked to recollect his fondest memories of the Institute, he spoke of the unique opportunities which the Institute offered him to study alongside people of diverse backgrounds, from all parts of the world, in an amicable collegial environment. For Fulvio, the diverse specialties among the teaching staff, with each professor demonstrating a remarkable breadth of knowledge provided for a stimulating intellectual atmosphere.

Sister Maria Jose Casanova Muñoz, CSM and Sister Luisa Pereira, CSM, Argentinian members of the Congregation of Santa Marta, recall their time at the Mater Ecclesiae Institute with great fondness. They describe their five years there as a graced time characterised by abiding friendships, with lively classroom debates spilling out into the cloister of the Angelicum. Through their studies at the Institute these Sisters acquired a firm grasp of theological concepts and were equipped with the pedagogical skills to transmit these to their own students. They are certain that the close and amiable relationship between the Institute's professors and students helps contribute to greater learning outcomes and fosters a commitment to academic excellence.

Valeria Giovagnorio, one of the many lay alumni of the Institute, has enduring memories of her years studying theology at Mater Ecclesiae. She recalls the passion which the professors had for their subjects and how they cultivated a love of learning in their students. Their enthusiasm helped unite the students in their desire for intellectual progress and allowed long-lasting friendships to flourish among them. Today, Valeria maintains regular contacts with her friends and colleagues at Mater Ecclesiae Institute. In her work as a high school teacher she frequently recalls what she learned from her fellow students and teachers, while confidently imparting the theological wisdom she acquired during her time at the Angelicum.

Learn more about Mater Ecclesiae and its offerings on the [Angelicum website](#).



Above, Fr. Salvati and students of the Institute. Below, Venerable Luigia Tincani (1889–1976).



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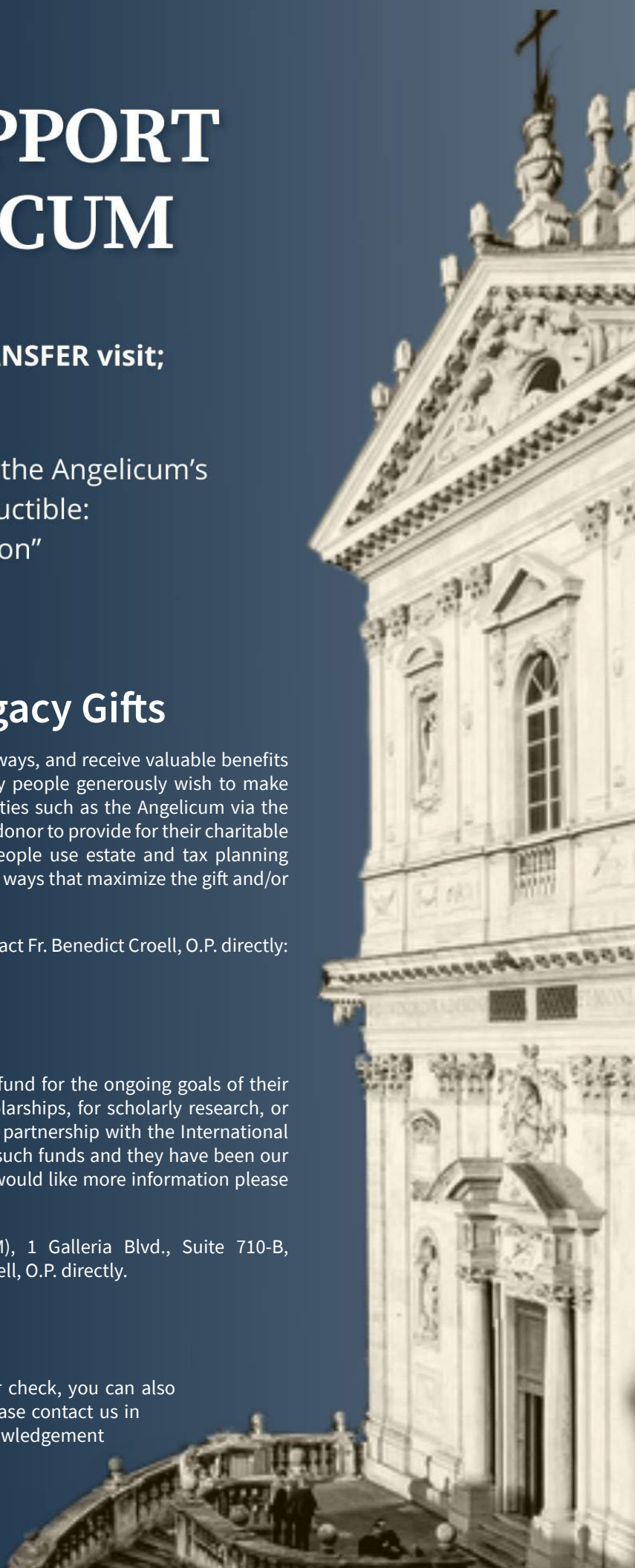
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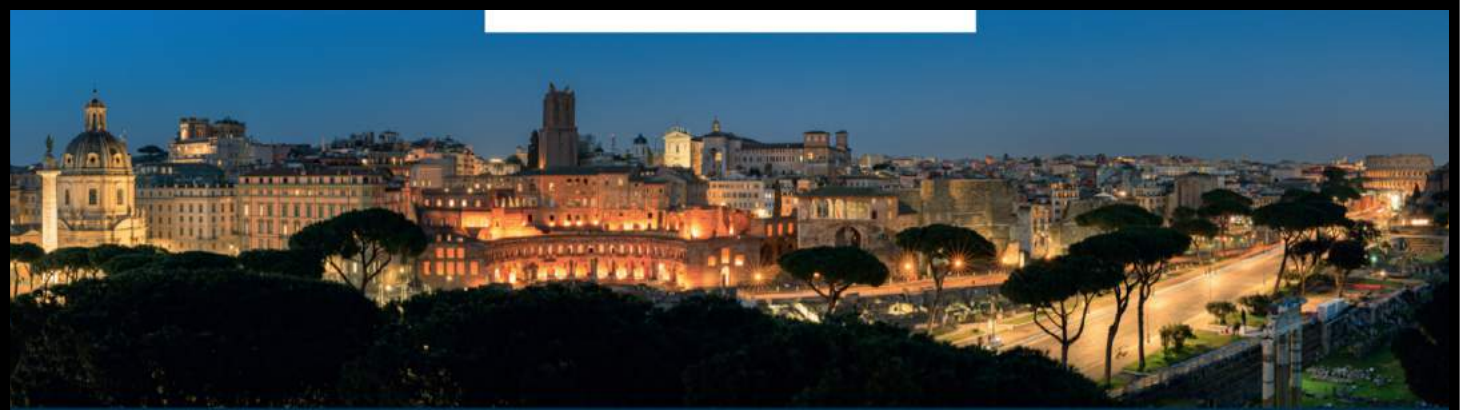
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International Dominican Foundation (ANGELICUM), 1 Galleria Blvd., Suite 710-B, Metairie, LA 70001, USA. Or contact Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P. directly.

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