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Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the inauguration of the exhibition “(RE)VERSUS. Reuse and redemption in the heritage of the Vatican Library and in the art of Sidival Fila”

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the inauguration of the exhibition “(RE)VERSUS- Reuse and redemption in the heritage of the Vatican Library and in the art of Sidival Fila” (Vatican Apostolic Library, 28 April to 15 July 2023):

Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

On several occasions, and most widely and pointedly in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, I have paused to reflect on the possible causes, the mechanisms and the consequences of the “throwaway culture”. It is one of the most dramatic phenomena of our time, whereby human society tends to cast aside everything that does not meet the criteria of efficiency, productivity, and responsiveness, but also of beauty, youthfulness, strength and vivacity. My reflections in this regard naturally move from a theological-pastoral perspective, but today I see with amazement and interest how the culture of rejection can also be approached from an aesthetic and even a library-economic perspective. This is a nice surprise!

Indeed, the exhibition that is being inaugurated today in the Vatican Library – the fourth of this new project of exchange between historical heritage and contemporary art – already presents in the title and the subtitle two significant tracks to explore: “(Re)versus. Reuse and redemption in the heritage of the Vatican Library and in the art of Sidival Fila”. In effect, in fact, by “reacting” - to use a chemical term - the centuries-long heritage of the Apostolic Library with the work of the Brazilian artist and Franciscan Father Sidival Fila, two paths intersect to overcome the “throwaway culture” in a way that is as creative as it is poetic, and seasoned with healthy irony.

On the one hand, the concept of “redeeming”, or rather recuperating waste, practiced by Father Fila by collecting fabrics, embroideries, silk fragments. He gives them a new life, that consists neither in the reconstruction of that of their origin nor in a new functionalization, but simply in reoffering them on a neutral background, where they

find, isolated as they are, a dignity and consideration such as they may never have had. They are almost validated in their very condition as fragments, like the relics of a shipwreck from which they fortunately escaped.

On the other hand, the idea of “reuse”, of which the curators have gone to seek out the most diverse and interesting cases in the book reserve of the Apostolic See: artistic, restorative, decorative, even “fraudulent” reuses that have enabled the fragments of our past to survive their age and to reach ours.

It seems to me that the need to overcome the “throwaway culture” through visiting, but I would say also meditating on the works and books on display, may find in this exhibition not only new and more complex motivations, but also solutions, perspectives and outlets. The openings that only art and study can give, that come from welcoming inspiration and the exercise of memory, as I happened to think precisely when visiting the Apostolic Library a few years ago, when suddenly I felt the famous: *Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt* (*Aeneid* I, 462) re-emerge and echo within me.

I therefore thank the heads of the Library, the curators of the exhibition and Father Sidival Fila, for this interesting journey that will be offered to visitors. Without any confessional purpose, but rather in accordance with the sole criteria of scientific research and artistic work, it is intended to offer to everyone elements for reflection on moving from the “throwaway culture” to the “culture of harmony”. I bless its work and efforts, wishing it the widest and most acknowledged success.

From the Vatican, 26 April 2023

FRANCIS
