

Bulletin of the Archaeological Museum of the “Studium Biblicum Franciscanum”

May 2012. By Davide Bianchi

News:

A number of illustrious guests visited the museum during the month of May.

On Friday, 4 May, the Custos of the Holy Land, Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa paid an informal visit to the museum, during the course of which he discussed the forthcoming museum renovation works with the museum's director, Father Eugenio Alliata. The design phase, which is being carried out by a team of architects and museum specialists, is scheduled to begin in June and finish in December, with the restoration works themselves beginning that same month. Visiting on the same day were the eight members of the General Definitory of the Franciscan Order and fra José Rodríguez Carballo, the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor¹.



¹ http://sbf.custodia.org/default.asp?id=455&id_n=1681

On Thursday, 10 May, a group from the Italian television program “La Grande Storia” (“The Big Story”) broadcast by Rai 3 came to the museum to record a long interview with Father Eugenio Alliata as part of a documentary, whose technical consultant is Father Francesco Rossi de Gasperis S.J., on the historical figure of Jesus which will be broadcast in Italy during the month of December 2012. The recording at the museum was the culmination of an intensive week of filming in Israel, including at a number of archaeological and historical sites belonging to the Custody of the Holy Land. The interview highlighted the scientific importance of archaeology which, in raising questions about the past, provides important evidence permitting us to reconstruct ancient historical contexts and, in this case, actual places connected with Jesus’ life.

Scientific Activities:

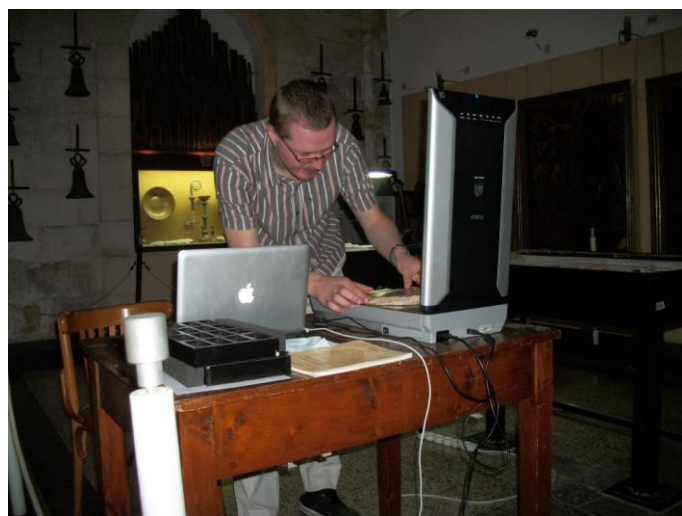
On Tuesday, 22 May, Professor Alexei Lidov, director of research at the Institute for World Culture at Moscow State University met with the museum’s director, Father Alliata. The Russian scholar, an expert in Byzantine art, is particularly interested in models of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre made from mother-of-pearl. Prior to his arrival in Jerusalem he had in fact been in London for a special exhibition of a scale model at the British Museum of the same type that is on display at the museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum². Professor Lidov is also focusing his attentions on the study of an object from our own collections that he believes to have been a special container for transporting the holy fire that, according to the Greek Orthodox tradition, miraculously catches fire in the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre each year on Easter Saturday.



² http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/holy_sepulchre.aspx

On the same day, a Czech scholar photographed and digitized the collection of Mesopotamian tablets with cuneiform inscriptions preserved in the great hall of the museum. The results will feed into the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI), a joint project between the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science³.

The initiative, which is benefiting from the collaboration of an international group of Asian specialists, museum curators and historians of science, aims to make available through the Internet cuneiform tablets dating from the earliest period of writing, approximately 3350 BC, until the early Christian period. It has thus been a special, and prestigious, honor for the museum of the SBF to be associated with this project.



³ <http://cdli.ucla.edu/>