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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Inauguration of the “Anima Mundi” Museum and Exhibition on Amazonia in the Vatican Museums

At 16.00 this afternoon, the Holy Father Francis inaugurated and visited the first section of the new layout of the Ethnological Museum of the Vatican Museums.

This sector of the Museums, which brings together artistic and cultural artefacts from non-European peoples, collected by Pope Pius XI in 1925 also with collections dating back to previous ages, begins a new phase in its history with the evocative name, the *Anima Mundi* Vatican Ethnological Museum.

To express closeness and participation in the important works of the Synod, today’s event coincided with the presentation of an exhibition dedicated to the Amazonia, *Mater Amazonia – The deep breath of the world*, set out in the first restructured space of the *Anima Mundi* Vatican Ethnological Museum, dedicated to Australia and Oceania. The presentation took place in the presence of the Synod Fathers.

After a brief address from His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Governorate of Vatican City State, the Pope gave the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I warmly greet you all and thank Cardinal Bertello for his words.

I like to think that what we are inaugurating today is not simply a museum according to the traditional concept. Indeed, I have found appropriate the name that has been chosen for this collection, so evocative: *Anima mundi*, the soul of the world.

I think that the Vatican Museums are called increasingly to become a living “home”, inhabited by and open to all,

with the doors wide open to populations from all over the world. The Vatican Museums open to all, without exception. A place where all may feel represented; where it can be perceived in a tangible way that the gaze of the Church precludes no-one.

Those who enter here should feel that there is room in this house for them too, for their people, their tradition, their culture: the European and the Indian, the Chinese and the native of the Amazonian or Congolese forest, of Alaska or of the Australian deserts or of the islands of the Pacific. All peoples are here, in the shadow of the dome of Saint Peter's, close to the heart of the Church and to the Pope. And this is because art is not something rootless: art is born of the heart of peoples. It is a message: from the heart of one people to another.

Here each person should also feel that "his" art has the same value and is cared for and preserved with the same passion that is reserved for the masterpieces of the Renaissance or the immortal Greek and Roman sculptures, which attract millions of people every year. Here you will find a special space: the space of dialogue, of openness to the other, of encounter.

I appreciate that the exhibition, and for which I thank all those who worked on it – curators, architects, engineers and workers, everyone! – is marked by transparency. Transparency is an important value, especially in an ecclesial institution. We always need it! Over the course of time, thousands of works from all over the world will find space in these windows, and this type of installation intends to put them almost in dialogue with each other. And since works of art are the expression of the spirit of the people, the message we receive is that we must always look to every culture, to the other, with openness of spirit and benevolence.

Beauty unites us. It invites us to experience human fraternity, contrasting the culture of resentment, racism, nationalism, which is always lurking. these are selective cultures, cultures with limited numbers.

A few months ago, some works of Chinese art left this museum for Beijing. And before that others had arrived in some Islamic countries... How many good initiatives can be achieved thanks to art, succeeding in overcoming even barriers and distances.

Today I would like to thank those who take care of these precious works every day: the curator of the *Anima Mundi* Museum, Father Nicola Mapelli, who is a PIME missionary – and this is very consistent! – the restorers of the Ethnological Materials Restoration Laboratory, and all those who collaborate in this work. Thank you all!

And thank you also for having inaugurated this new exhibition with a special exhibition dedicated to the Amazon, precisely in the days in which we are experiencing the Synod dedicated to this region. And for this I also thank the Consolata Missionaries, the Salesians, the Capuchins, and the Saverians: various charisms that met in the name of the Amazon.

May this Ethnological Museum preserve its specific identity over time and remind everyone of the value of harmony and peace between peoples and nations. And may the art collected here make the voice of God resound in those who visit this collection. Thank you very much.