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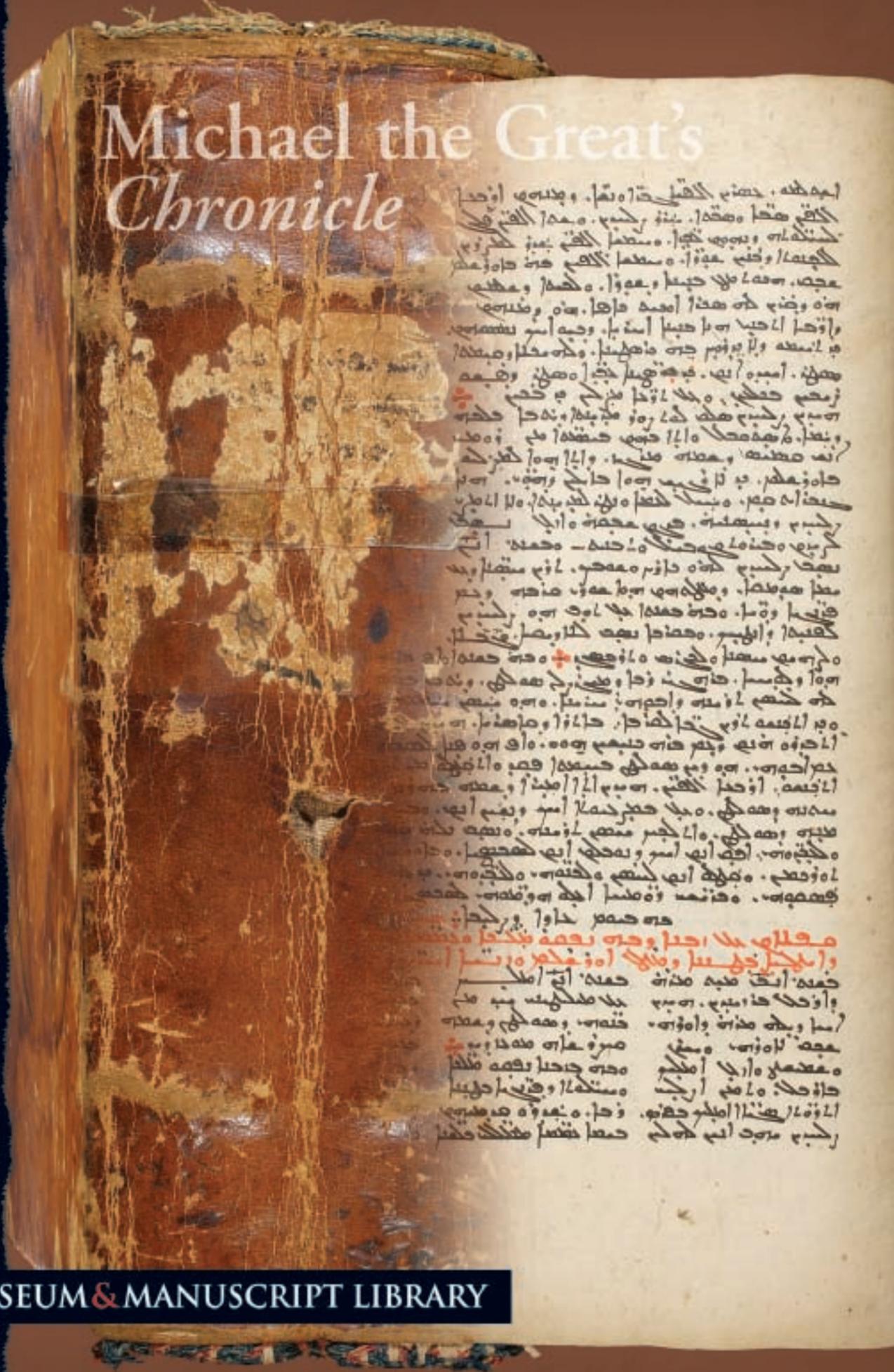
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ILLUMINATIONS



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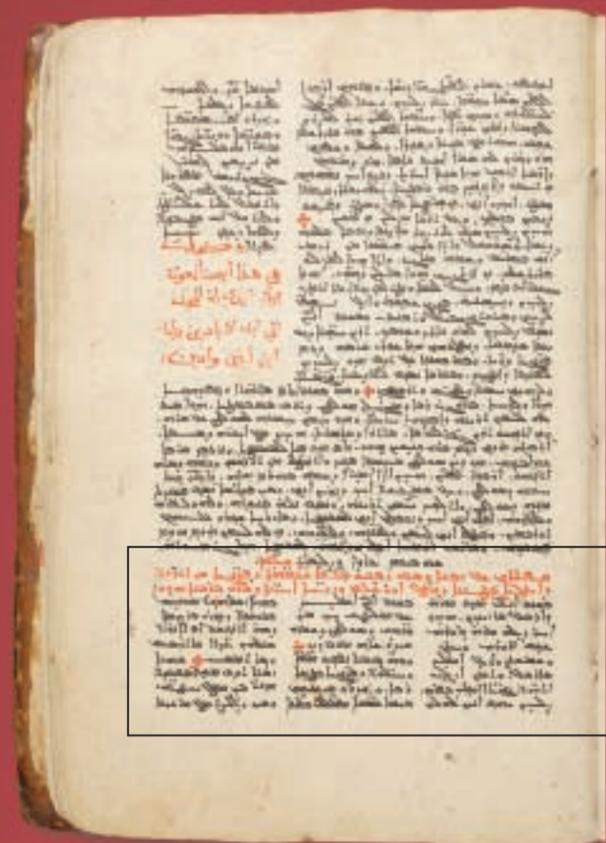
Gregory Swenson, DDS
North Oaks, Minnesota

# Illuminations

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ON THE COVER: This excerpt from the *Chronicle* of Michael the Great describes the launch of the Third Crusade in the year 1189 (reckoned by Michael as the "Year 1500 of the Greeks," following the Syriac preference for the calendar based on the founding of the Hellenistic Seleucid Dynasty at Babylon in 311 BCE ). In the middle column, where he typically recorded information about political events, he describes the Crusade as "innumerable crowds of people speaking many languages, who couldn't understand each other." In the left-hand column Michael reports on events in the Syriac Orthodox Church (of which he was Patriarch at the time), while in the the right-hand column he records other information, including on the next page his report of a full solar eclipse in 1191. Fol. 372r.



## Hill Museum & Manuscript Library

In the Benedictine tradition of reverence for human thought and creativity, the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) preserves manuscripts, printed books and art at Saint John's University and undertakes photographic projects in regions throughout the world.

HMML is the home of the world's largest collection of manuscript images and of *The Saint John's Bible*, a handwritten, illuminated Bible in modern English.

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## Dear Friends,

When I tell people what I do, they typically respond with "How fascinating!" or perhaps, depending on their age, "Cool!" or "Awesome!" They seem to imagine our cultural preservation work as something akin to the mystery and intrigue of the Indiana Jones or Lara Croft movies. While my job isn't quite as thrilling—or dangerous—as these movies might depict, I have to admit that there are moments that truly are "awesome," moments when the struggles and challenges of the ancient world described in our manuscripts seem close to the events of today.

Working on the digitization and publication of the *Chronicle* of Patriarch Michael the Great provided my colleagues and me with several such experiences. Michael's *Chronicle* documents religious, social, political, and even astronomic and climatic events that still echo in our world today. In this issue of *Illuminations* you can read about how this unique manuscript, long inaccessible to scholars, has become available to the world with HMML's help.

I'm proud that HMML has developed innovative and cost-effective ways to preserve and protect important documents like Michael's *Chronicle*. When I hear news of political or social turmoil—as most recently in Georgia and Mumbai, India—I am even more determined to help libraries in these countries to pass on their cultural heritage to future generations.

I am grateful to everyone who supports our mission with their faith, friendship and resources. I pray that peace will finally prevail for people of all traditions and cultures in 2009.

*Above: Twelfth century frescoes at Udabno Monastery, located in Georgia's high desert overlooking its border with Azerbaijan.*

Sincerely yours,

Father Columba Stewart, OSB  
Executive Director HMML

# The dramatic journey by *Michael the Great's Chronicle* to Collegeville and beyond.

By Mary MacDonell Belisle

As the car shimmies along a dusty Syrian roadway in the June heat, its passengers take turns at a laptop computer, making edits to a proposal for Mar Gregorios, Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo. They are traveling to an academic conference hosted by Mar Gregorios, but their thoughts are on a single manuscript, secured by two keys in the vault of one of his parish churches, a treasure which the members of Saint George parish have thus far kept to themselves.

Father Columba Stewart OSB, Executive Director of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML), consults with publisher George Kiraz of Gorgias Press about the possibility of digitizing and publishing this unique 1598 AD copy of a 12<sup>th</sup> century work by Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Michael the Great (1126–1199 AD). Oxford University Professor Sebastian Brock, the “greatest living scholar of Syriac,” according to Father Columba, trades ideas for the proposal with the two men and Walid Mourad, HMML’s field director.

HMML had already digitized some 300 manuscripts at the Syriac Orthodox parish, but this particular manuscript is special, and publishing a facsimile edition of it would be a tremendous boon to scholars and the crowning achievement of HMML’s work in Syria. The *Chronicle* of Michael the Great is a window to the past, a monumental effort by one man to write the history of the world from creation to his own time.

The manuscript came into the hands of the parishioners in the early 1800s at their original home in Edessa, an ancient Christian center in southeast Turkey. Over the centuries the Christian population had dwindled as the city, renamed Urfa, became a popular Muslim pilgrimage site. The

widespread persecution of Christian minority groups in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century forced the entire parish population to move in 1923 to Aleppo in northern Syria. They brought with them the keys to their abandoned church in Edessa and their precious manuscripts. These remained a connection to home and a symbol of the community’s second-century Christian heritage.

**THE WIDESPREAD PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIAN MINORITY GROUPS IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FORCED THE ENTIRE PARISH POPULATION TO MOVE IN 1923 TO ALEPPO IN NORTHERN SYRIA. THEY BROUGHT WITH THEM THE KEYS TO THEIR ABANDONED CHURCH IN EDESSA AND THEIR PRECIOUS MANUSCRIPTS.**

Among all their possessions, Michael’s *Chronicle* has a special place in the community’s memory. Rather than being kept with the other manuscripts in the parish library, the *Chronicle* lay in a vault in the church itself, along with the keys to the lost church in Edessa. Scholars had been unable to consult the manuscript since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the young French scholar Jean-Baptiste Chabot managed to have a handwritten copy

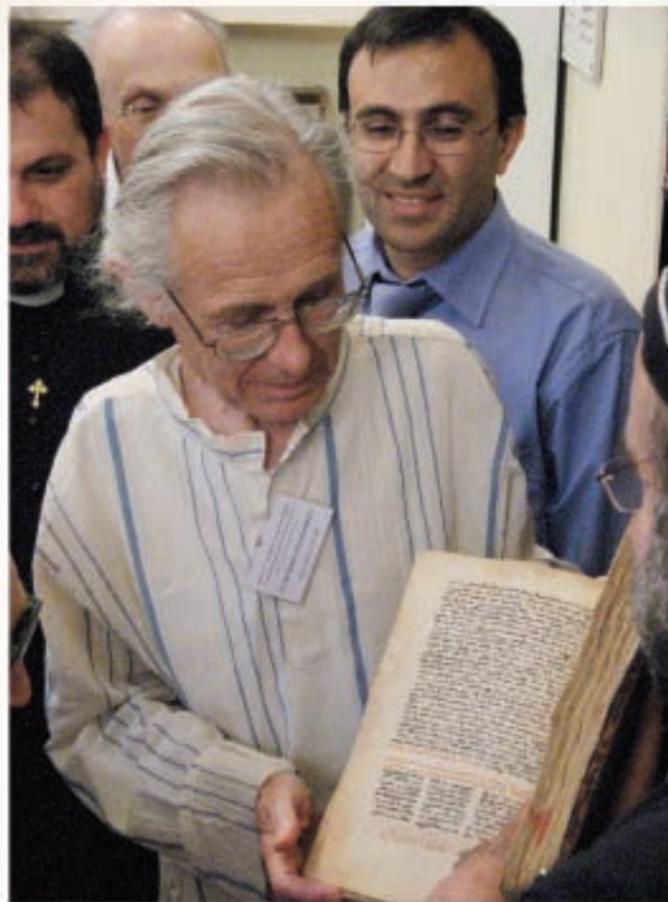
made. His copy, incomplete and not always accurate, was the only text available to scholars for more than a century.

At issue in the negotiations would be the approval to digitize and publish the *Chronicle*, the monetary remuneration for the refugee community, and many other logistical considerations between the parish, HMML, and Gorgias Press. HMML’s role would be high-quality digitization and image preparation. Having already digitized the other Syriac Orthodox manuscripts in Aleppo, HMML had proven its trustworthiness.

When the team arrived that night in Aleppo, negotiations with Mar Gregorios began late in the evening. A Syriac Orthodox benefactor had come forward to ensure a substantial royalty for the parish, making the project



*Mor Gregorios removes the manuscript of Michael the Great's Chronicle from its vault.*



*Dr. Sebastian Brock of Oxford holds the sole surviving copy of a uniquely important twelfth-century text of Michael the Great's Chronicle.*

financially viable for Gorgias Press. Mar Gregorios, persuaded by the scholarly advocates, promised to take the proposal to the parish. A week later HMML received word that the parish had given its permission.

Ammar Geeso, an Iraqi Christian refugee who had already photographed the rest of the Syriac Orthodox collection in Aleppo, digitized the *Chronicle* at HMML’s studio in Aleppo in a matter of days, sending the images to Wayne Torborg, HMML’s Director of Digital Collections and Imaging, for review and final preparation. The files were sent to Gorgias Press, and transformed into a bound, full-color proof of 700 pages. The first copy was unveiled in September at the quadrennial *Symposium Syriacum* in Granada, Spain. The full edition of 1000 copies will be available early in 2009.

Michael’s *Chronicle* is a compilation of 21 books of varying length, often formatted into three themed columns with a running historical timeline (Hebrew, Persian, Greek, Roman/Latin, Islamic, Turkish) graphically depicted at the bottom of each page. It has no story as such, but presents a “kaleidoscopic reflection” of the places and times from Creation to 1195. Readers are addressed as “brethren and scholars.” Patriarch Michael’s purpose for writing was to “demonstrate God’s hand in history.”

Scholars will study every inch of this manuscript: marginal notes and ownership inscriptions – the vellum, binding, and ornamentation – the script and page layout. The content includes information about natural disasters and climate, astronomy and astrology, Christian and Islamic history, the Crusades, and the interaction of rising Islam with Christianity. It contains direct quotations from lost historical works and 25 recognized sources from antiquity.

“Michael’s *Chronicle* is something more than just a text,” says Father Columba, comparing it to a family Bible where underlining, margin notes, and historical references on inside covers and end papers are also important. “We all come from somewhere, and are shaped by those origins. We hope that scholars will use manuscripts such as this to illuminate the history of peoples and places of vital significance today.”

With the *Chronicle* now available, scholars throughout the world will reveal what Michael has to say to the world today.

In addition to the *Chronicle* of Michael the Great, HMML has photographed more than 100,000 manuscripts and made them available for study. It is the home of a contemporary manuscript, *The Saint John's Bible*, which it is also digitizing. The journeys of all of these treasures – from creation to digitization, to study and publication – are speeded by the work of HMML and its supporters.

**Facsimile copies of Michael the Great's Chronicle will soon be for sale. Contact:**



**Gorgias Press LLC**  
180 Centennial Ave, Suite A  
Piscataway, NJ 08854. USA  
Phone: 732-885-8900 Fax: 732-885-8908  
E-Mail: sales@gorgiaspress.com

# Where We're Working

## Lviv, Ukraine

Lviv is a Ukrainian city whose multicultural past survives in two forms: its buildings and its books, particularly its manuscripts. A watershed between north and south, rain that falls in Lviv will flow eventually either north to the Baltic Sea, or south to the Black Sea. A gateway between west and east, Lviv lies in the province of Galicia, where the hills and forests of Central Europe begin to give way to plains that continue deep into Asia.

Metaphors of various kinds have been used to describe Lviv, depending on the point of view of the writers of its history. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Lviv was seen as a bulwark of Christianity against a sea of Turks, Tatars

and Mongols. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century it was described as an island of Catholics in a sea of Orthodoxy. Under Austrian administration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was viewed as an outpost of cosmopolitan Poles amidst a vast countryside of Ukrainian peasants. For Jews in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lviv was the birthplace of their dream for a Jewish state, while Ukrainian intellectuals and Polish aristocrats made it the cradle of Ukrainian national identity during liberal Habsburg rule. In 1988, it was the birthplace of Ukraine's move toward independence, and the place where the Ukrainian Catholic Church resurfaced after surviving for decades underground.



*HMML deputy director of manuscript preservation, Phil Steger, contemplates 20<sup>th</sup> century symbolic frescoes decorating the walls of Lviv's 14<sup>th</sup> century Armenian Cathedral.*



Євангеліє Тетр. Four Gospels. Opening pages of the Gospel of Matthew, with portrait of the Evangelist. Slavonic. STEF 4/HTIII-I 23, fols. 7-8. Manuscript on paper. 28.5 x 19 cm. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

While Lviv has always had a small Ukrainian population, today it is nearly all Ukrainian. Large numbers of Ukrainians moved into the city from the countryside after Stalin, then Hitler, and then Stalin again deported or massacred its Polish and Jewish residents. Yet, Lviv's architecture escaped Stalinist revision. From the ornate baroque and neo-classical houses with their sculptured balconies to its grand Viennese-style Opera House, Lviv's architecture bears witness to the central European sensibilities of its vanished builders.

The evidence of Lviv's multicultural past also lies recorded in the more than 5,000 manuscripts that can be found in Lviv's state libraries. Collected from churches, monasteries, synagogues and estates from throughout Galicia, most of the manuscripts in Lviv

are written in Latin, reflecting its Austrian and Polish Catholic identity, though many manuscripts are in Church Slavonic, reflecting its Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic identities. Torah scrolls give evidence of its Jewish past, and Armenian and Turkish manuscripts reflect its location along one of the routes of the Silk Road. Indeed, after the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the manuscripts in Lviv's libraries are in many ways the most eloquent remnant of Galicia's lost communities.

HMML is currently working with local partners to digitize the manuscript collections of the Stefanyk National Scientific Library, the second largest of Ukraine's manuscript libraries, and those of the Lviv Historical Museum.

# HMML News

## \$1 Million Fund Established at HMML in Honor of Father Columba Stewart, OSB

HMML executive director, the Rev. Columba Stewart, OSB, was presented with a gift totaling \$825,000 at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) Annual Millennium Club event Sept. 10. The gift is part of a \$1 million fund that has been established to support HMML's manuscript preservation initiatives over the next five years.

Contributed by HMML friends, the surprise gift paid tribute to Stewart and his successful five years as HMML's executive director. In June 2009, Father Columba will begin a year-long sabbatical for research and writing.

Under Fr. Columba's direction, HMML has become the largest resource for the study of Eastern Christian manuscripts in the world, ahead of the Vatican Library in Rome and the British Library in London.

"These funds will play a critical role in completing the preservation of these diverse, threatened and difficult-to-access manuscript collections," Fr. Columba said after receiving his gift. "They will be secure for future generations and available for researchers today. Given the present rise of intolerance in our world, the study of these manuscripts, with their variety of perspectives on the meaning of human life, can deepen our understanding of the experience of others and enrich our appreciation of our own history."

After his sabbatical, HMML will continue to rely upon Father Columba's unique combination of talents, skills, and credentials to help preserve manuscripts in countries where violence and instability make them more vulnerable than ever to destruction and loss," said Thomas J. Barrett, chairman of the HMML Board of Overseers. "The Board is grateful for his leadership and to all the friends who have supported HMML's mission over the years."

For information on how to contribute to this fund, please contact Erin Lonergan, director of development, 320-363-2095 or [elonergan@csbsju.edu](mailto:elonergan@csbsju.edu).

## HMML Receives Three Grants in Support of Preservation Initiatives

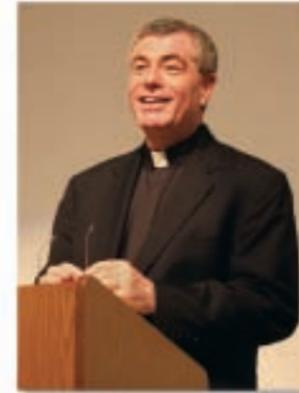
In June 2008, HMML was notified of three grant awards from private foundations that will support its current preservation initiatives.

The Mellon Foundation has awarded HMML a one-year planning grant for \$151,000 that will lay the groundwork for a multi-year, international collaboration for the cataloguing and study of the thousands of manuscripts in Arabic, Armenian, Ge'ez (Ethiopic), Syriac, Church Slavonic and Latin digitized by HMML since 2003. At the conclusion of the one-year planning project, HMML will seek funding for the implementation of the full, multi-year cataloguing effort.

The trustees of the Mildred H. Kellogg Trust pledged \$96,800 in support of a project to digitize the ancient manuscript culture of the Syriac Christian churches in southeast Turkey. The Kellogg Trust had previously supported HMML's work in Ethiopia and India as well as Turkey.

The Athwin Foundation has been a longtime supporter of HMML's preservation mission. Their most recent grant award of \$15,000 will support HMML's partnership with the Association for the Preservation of the Saint Thomas Christian Heritage (APSTCH) located in Tripunithura, Ernakulam District of Kerala. HMML and APSTCH are digitally photographing, archiving and cataloguing the extraordinary palm leaf and paper manuscript collections of Kerala's Syriac Christian traditions. These newly discovered manuscript collections have never been studied and promise to shed new light on the history of India's indigenous Christians. This generous grant from the Athwin Foundation will support the project for one year of operation.

## HMML inaugurates new speaker series: *Ex Oriente Lux*



On Tuesday, October 7, the Rev. Columba Stewart, OSB, executive director of HMML inaugurated a new speaker series, "*Ex Oriente Lux* (Light from the East): Eastern Christians Illuminating Global Events." The event took place in Alcuin Library on the Saint John's University campus and was free and open to the public.

The featured speaker was Chorbishop John D. Faris, associate secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, [www.cnewa.org](http://www.cnewa.org), a papal agency founded to provide humanitarian and pastoral support to the Eastern Christian churches. His presentation, titled, "Church and Churches: The Spread of Christianity from Jerusalem," explored how Christianity went from being a small group of Aramaic-speaking Jews in Jerusalem to being the world's most diverse, populous, and widespread religion. He spoke about the first churches that established themselves in the cities and countryside of the Holy Land, and the imminent risk of extinction these communities now face after thriving for two millennia in the Middle East. Chorbishop Faris described HMML's work to preserve the manuscript heritage of these communities as being of "crucial importance" to their survival. "Believe me," he said, "this is not a backburner initiative." Chorbishop Faris offered an additional lecture on October 8, at the Minneapolis Club in downtown Minneapolis.

This series seeks to educate members of the CSB/SJU and surrounding communities about the lives and legacies of the Christians of the East. The series title refers to the fact that Christianity came from the East, and to the conviction that Eastern Christian perspectives on world events have much to offer Western audiences.

The next lecture in this free series will take place during the spring. Watch the HMML Web site, [www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org), for upcoming *Ex Oriente Lux* announcements.

*Above: Chorbishop John D. Faris, associate secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, was the featured speaker at HMML's first Ex Oriente Lux Lecture.*

## HMML Continues Work in Malta

Since October 2007, the Malta Study Center has operated a digitization studio in partnership with the National Archives of Malta in the Banca Giuratale, Mdina, where the Magna Curia Castellaniae collection is being photographed. The Magna Curia Castellaniae is the archive of the central law court of the Knights of Malta, which had jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases on the islands of Malta and Gozo. The archives contain 1,411 volumes plus various registers and indexes, dating from 1543 until 1798. In the past year, the Center has digitized 142 of the oldest volumes, covering the years 1543 to 1625, comprising some 60,000 images.

The archives of the Magna Curia Castellaniae contain more than the accounts of forgotten trials. The collection records the testimony of ordinary people recounting details of their daily lives, which would otherwise be forgotten. It is an important source for the social, cultural, and economic history of the Maltese people during the administration of the Knights of Malta. The digitization project will improve scholarly access to this collection, which the British government separated from the rest of the archives of the Knights of Malta during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The records were stored in the Maltese Courts of Justice, and transferred to the Banca Giuratale by 1986.

The Malta Study Center is an integral part of HMML and was established in 1973 in collaboration with the Honorary Consul General of Malta-St. Paul, Joseph S. Micallef, K.M. The mission of the Center is to preserve and make accessible archival materials related to the history of the island of Malta and the Knights of Malta. The Center is the only location outside of Malta where scholars have access to the archives of the Knights of Malta, as well as the other archival treasures of this island-nation. In addition, HMML assists in training the Maltese staff in preserving, cataloguing and making these records accessible on-site.

Visit our website at [www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org) and click on "Research" to learn more about the Malta Study Center.

*The Saint John's Bible:*  
A Modern Vision through Medieval Methods  
Opens at  
*The Walters Art Museum*  
February 15, 2009

The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland will present *The Saint John's Bible: A Modern Vision through Medieval Methods*, an exhibition showcasing 44 contemporary illuminated manuscript pages from Prophets and Wisdom Books of *The Saint John's Bible*. In addition to the Bible folios, 49 renowned Walters manuscripts and rare books from a variety of religious traditions will set *The Saint John's Bible* within the historical context and global traditions of decorating sacred text. The exhibition will be on view from February 15 to May 24, 2009 and is being organized by the Walters Art Museum in association with the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library.

The large-scale Bible, approximately 3 feet wide by 2 feet tall when open, is being created in Wales under the direction of Donald Jackson, master calligrapher and senior scribe to Queen Elizabeth's Crown Office in the House of Lords. Even though *The Saint John's Bible* is not yet finished, it has already been widely recognized as a major monument of contemporary calligraphy and



*The*WALTERS  
ART MUSEUM

how these historic traditions are being carried into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

*Walters Manuscripts & Rare Books*

Folios from the Wisdom Books and Prophets will be

interspersed with examples of Christian and Jewish texts from medieval Europe, Islamic manuscripts from the Middle East and India, and Buddhist scriptures from Thailand. A number of artifacts from the Walters collection demonstrate the sources of imagery in *The Saint John's Bible*, drawing attention to the manuscript's interfaith nature.

book arts, particularly for its use of new and innovative imagery within an ancient tradition.

“*The Saint John's Bible* is a masterpiece of calligraphy and a showcase of contemporary illumination,” said Walters Director Gary Vikan. “It is particularly fitting to pair this Bible with the Walters’ distinguished collection of illuminated spiritual manuscripts and rare books to demonstrate

A 12<sup>th</sup>-century English manuscript from the Walters collection, originally from Rochester Cathedral, will be included in the exhibition. “In Paul’s Letter to Philemon from the Rochester Bible, the illuminated letter “P,” which opens the text, is typical of the Romanesque period or High Middle Ages and is filled with swirling vines and brightly colored beasts intertwined with the letter,” said Kathryn Gerry, exhibition co-curator and research associate in the department of manuscripts & rare books. “The script and page layout of this book are similar to the books that inspired the script and layout of *The Saint John's Bible*.”

The exhibition will also include one of the finest illuminated Korans in the Walters collection and possibly one of the finest surviving Korans from the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the world. This rare Koran was probably made in a region that is now part of present-day Afghanistan. “The book is alive with rich and

intricate ornament, and it features a beautiful script that reflects the great tradition of Islamic calligraphy,” said Ben Tilghman, exhibition co-curator and Zanvyl Krieger curatorial fellow in the department of manuscripts & rare books. “The commentary in the margins describes ways of pronouncing the words of the text, so like *The Saint John's Bible* it is both beautiful and scholarly.”

*The Walters Art Museum*

The Walters Art Museum is located in Baltimore’s historic Mount Vernon Cultural District at North Charles and Centre Streets and is one of only a few museums worldwide to present a comprehensive history of art from the third millennium B.C. to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among its thousands of treasures, the Walters holds the finest collection of ivories, jewelry, enamels and bronzes in America and a spectacular reserve of illuminated manuscripts and rare books.

Peabody Court is the official hotel of the Walters Art Museum.

This historic property is just around the corner from the museum and features *George’s*, a full-service restaurant.

For hotel reservations, call 1-800-292-5500 and ask for the special Walters discounted rate.

*The Saint John's Bible* is a special ticketed exhibition.

General admission to the Walters permanent collection is free.

Purchase tickets at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com), 800-551-SEAT or by calling 410-547-9000, ext. 265.

Tickets for the special exhibition are: \$8 for adults, \$6 for seniors (65+) and \$4 for college students and young adults (18-25). Children 17 & under and Walters members are FREE.

Museum hours are 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. The museum is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

[www.thewalters.org](http://www.thewalters.org)  
24 hour information line 410-547-9000  
[info@thewalters.org](mailto:info@thewalters.org)