

Monday 9 April 2018

First Benedictine-commissioned Bible in 500 years hosted at Notre Dame

Jesus's life and message explored in stunning detail

A heritage volume of the first completely handwritten and illuminated Bible commissioned by a Benedictine Abbey since the invention of the printing press more than 500 years ago is on display at Notre Dame University's Fremantle Campus.

Work on *The Saint John's Bible* commenced in 1998 under the guidance of Donald Jackson – the official master scribe and calligrapher to Queen Elizabeth II – with support from the Saint John's Abbey and Saint John's University in Minnesota USA.

A 30-person international team of calligraphers and artists took 13 years to create the Bible's original manuscript of more than 1100 pages, including 160 major religious artworks, from calfskin vellum.

Limited to 299 sets of seven volumes, each volume of *The Saint John's Bible* represents a portion of text and illustrations from the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible.

Each volume – measuring 60cm x 90cm – is individually bound by hand in a single piece of Italian leather, adorned with a silver clasp, and is numbered and initialled by Mr Jackson as a signature of authenticity.

Volume 6 of the Bible, *Gospels & Acts*, is on loan to Notre Dame for 12 months. It will be officially launched and blessed on Friday 25 May as part of a Festival of Religious Art on the University's Fremantle Campus. Other volumes are on display at universities across the world.

The Bible explores the life of Jesus Christ and the early journeys of the Church in stunning detail. The scattered use of gold leaf to represent the 'divine'; silver/platinum to reflect the principle of wisdom; and detailed iconography to symbolise God's omnipresence are just some of its striking features.

"*The Saint John's Bible* is not only a sacred work of art – it speaks to and inspires people of all faith journeys to follow Jesus's footsteps to deliver peace, good will and love to all of God's creations," Dr Angela McCarthy, Senior Lecturer in the School of Philosophy & Theology, said.

"All staff, students and members of the community are welcome to visit Notre Dame's Fremantle Campus to witness this magnificent volume of *Gospels & Acts*. We hope you appreciate the true scale, beauty and artistic intent that has gone into making this magnificent Bible."

The Gospels & Acts Volume of The Saint John's Bible is on display in the University's St Teresa's Library, located in Bateman Courtyard off Mouat Street, Fremantle. Please visit the Notre Dame website (nd.edu.au) for more information about the launch event on Friday 25 May.

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