



## DIÖZESANMUSEUM PADERBORN

Press Release, 7th December 2011

### **Francis – Light from Assisi**

**Large art and cultural historical exhibition at the Diözesanmuseum Paderborn  
opens on 9th December 2011**

PADERBORN – As part of its well-known series of Medieval exhibitions the Diözesanmuseum Paderborn, the Archbishopric of Paderborn's Diocesan Museum, will be staging a large art and cultural historical exhibition on Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan religious orders from 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011 until 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012. With "Francis – Light from Assisi" it is the first time in 30 years that an exhibition in a German-speaking area has been dedicated to the saint. The exhibition is supplemented by an additional display in the Franciscan monastery of Paderborn, as well as a contemporary large format film screening in Paderborn's city centre.

St Francis of Assisi (1181/82-1226) is one of the most important saints of the Middle Ages. Voluntary dispossession of wealth, pacifism, humility and compassion for his fellow man, his responsible attitude to all creation, and interreligious dialogue are the defining features of the life of the man from Assisi. For centuries he has inspired those who are seeking to find a new religious and spiritual direction for their lives, and to this day still has lost none of his fascination.

The **exhibition "Francis – Light from Assisi"** is comprised of 14 thematised units. It opens with the charismatic founding fathers, Francis and Clare of Assisi: their radical change of life-style was set against the background of the prospering urban communities of central Italy at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The exhibition illustrates important aspects of the impressive history of the work of the orders during the Middle Ages and Modern Age, up to the dissolution of many convents as a result of secularisation and the culture war (Kulturkampf) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Central guiding principles of Franciscan spirituality are illustrated using pictures from the lives of important saints such as Bernardine of Sienna, John Duns Scotus, Anthony of Padua, Bertold of Regensburg and Elisabeth of Hungary.

Approximately 200 exhibits from national and international museums and libraries are on display in the Paderborn exhibition. Loans have come from, among others, the Louvre, the Copenhagen National Museum, the Pinacoteca Vaticana and the Museo di Roma, the Museo del Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco Assisi, the National Museum in Luxembourg, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Florence, the Berlin State Library and the Museum of Applied Arts in Berlin, the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, and the cathedral treasury (Domschatzkammer) in Cologne. In addition, numerous convents, such as those in Altötting, Füssen, Eichstätt and Lucerne, have contributed previously unseen items to the exhibition.

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#### **Press Office "Franziskus – Light from Assisi"**

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Among the highlights of the exhibition "Francis – Light from Assisi" are outstanding examples of early Italian panel painting, including one of the earliest depictions of St Francis by Margaritone d'Arezzo in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and two panel paintings by Fra Angelico, baroque masterpieces by Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck or Georges de la Tour and sumptuously illuminated manuscripts, such as the Legend of St Francis according to Bonaventura.

Numerous important objects are also coming from Assisi itself: St Francis' chalice and paten, which, according to tradition, he received from a priest, as well as a breviary which he could well have used himself. For the first time ever, fragments of the frescoes from the vault of the church of St Francis in Assisi, which was damaged by the earthquake in 1997, are to be put on display in Germany. The church in which St Francis is buried in one of the seven highest ranking Catholic churches, and its interior is decorated with frescoes by some of the most important painters of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, such as Giotto, Cimabue and Simone Martini.

The exhibits are further complemented by six displays from calligrapher Brody Neuenschwander, including the work "Man in the Habit", which graphically illustrates the habit of the Franciscan order and the symbolism behind it. For one display on the famous Canticle of the Sun, Brody Neuenschwander has reconstructed the saint's original manuscript.

The **exhibition unit "Our monastery is the world"** in Paderborn's Franciscan monastery documents the commitment of the Franciscan order to both church and society from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present. The display focuses on Franciscan patterns of living from industrialisation to globalisation in the face of an increasingly secularised society. The exhibition was organised by the specialist centre Fachstelle Franziskanische Forschung in Münster.

"Francis – Light from Assisi" is being staged as a result of initiatives from the German speaking Franciscan orders and with support from the local Franciscan communities. It is under the patronage of the three Ministers General of the Franciscans, the Conventual Franciscans and the Rome-based Capuchins, as well as of the Archbishop of Paderborn. The exhibition was designed in close co-operation with the Fachstelle Franziskanische Forschung in Münster and the Chair of Medieval History at the University of Potsdam and with the support of every German-speaking province where the religious order is found.

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## DIÖZESANMUSEUM PADERBORN

A **richly illustrated catalogue** has been produced for the exhibition by the Hirmer publishing company in Munich, and illuminates every facet of the topic with contributions by eminent scholars. The companion volume to the conference "Gelobte Armut. Armutskonzepte der franziskanischen Ordensfamilie zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart" (The vow of poverty. Franciscan concepts of poverty, ranging from the ideal to reality, from the Middle Ages to the present), which was held in the run up to the exhibition, is produced by the Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh publishing house.

### **Film show "Thursday"**

In Paderborn's pedestrian precinct contemporary artistic duo M+M have reset a scene from the life of St Francis, namely the break with his father and his radical renunciation of wealth, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for a large format film screening. The work, entitled "Thursday", was commissioned by the Ausstellungsgesellschaft Paderborn and was curated by Florian Matzner. It is shown every day at dusk.

### **Supplementary programme**

A wide-ranging supplementary programme to the exhibition "Francis – Light from Assisi", including lectures and special guided tours, is on offer. For example, the educational institution of the archdiocese of Paderborn, the Liborianum, is organising an educational day with a lecture and a guided tour of the exhibition. Paderborn Tourist Information Office invites visitors to special guided tours, such as the tour "Auf franziskanischen Spuren in Paderborn" (On the trail of the Franciscans in Paderborn), which takes visitors to sites in Paderborn where the influence of the Franciscans has been felt.

**On the opening day, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011, entry for visitors to the exhibition housed in the Diözesanmuseum Paderborn is available at a reduced price from 6pm until midnight.**

**Further information available at:  
[www.dioezesanmuseum-paderborn.de](http://www.dioezesanmuseum-paderborn.de)**

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