



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

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**Press Conference to present the project “Saint Peter’s Basilica: AI-Enhanced Experience” realized by Microsoft and the Fabric of Saint Peter in collaboration with the “Fratelli tutti” Foundation and the “Digital Mission of the outgoing Basilica”**

At 11.30 today, a press conference was held in the Holy See Press Office, Via della Conciliazione 54, to present the project “Saint Peter’s Basilica: AI-Enhanced Experience” realized by Microsoft and the Fabric of Saint Peter in collaboration with the “Fratelli tutti” Foundation and the “Digital Mission of the outgoing Basilica”.

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, O.F.M. Conv., archpriest of the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican, vicar general of His Holiness for Vatican City and president of the Fabric of Saint Peter, and Mr. Brad Smith, vice chair and president of Microsoft.

The following is the intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, O.F.M. Conv.:

**Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, O.F.M. Conv.**

Saint Peter’s Basilica is like a starry sky on a summer’s night: you remain enchanted by its splendour, its munificence.

However, it risks being a mute witness to “infinite beauty” if the intelligence is not enriched with knowledge and the aspiration of the heart is not nourished by a spiritual experience.

One needs an astrolabe, a telescope to know the stars; and one needs a spaceship to penetrate the starry sky. Such an experience can change your outlook. NASA director Bill Nelson was able to look at the world from the window of the space shuttle in 1986. Recently, he told us: “I didn’t see racial divisions, I didn’t see religious divisions, I didn’t see political divisions. I saw this beautiful Earth, where we are all citizens of the planet Earth”.

Therefore, three years ago, the Fabric of Saint Peter began to think about an “astronomical observatory” and a

“spaceship” for the Basilica. For this purpose, we chose information technology as an opportunity for the development of the mission. And today we have reached the point of defining a coordinated plan for communication services and activities for an “outgoing Basilica”.

In recent years, not without effort, we have confronted the splendid challenge of the relationship between humanity and technology with a spirit of fraternity, which has inspired important collaborations marked by circularity, skills, points of view and means, with the common objective of promoting human growth.

We have thus been able to structure an information system for the Fabric, to place Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) at the service of the Offices, and to undertake the process of digitalization of document, archive and human resources management; in addition, we achieved the first step of the Building Information Modelling (BIM) of the Basilica.

Then, platforms and apps were created to offer services to pilgrims and visitors in order to enhance their experience at Saint Peter’s; and the meanings enshrined in the monumental complex were made more comprehensible - through multimedia languages, the use of Artificial Intelligence and the proposal of training courses. In this sense, the effort is to decode for today’s humanity, with the help of digital technology, the intertwining of history, art and spirituality that make the Basilica unique in the world.

Besides, the Church has always done this, seeking to communicate its faith in the divine through the languages of the time and the cultural context to which it belongs.

Today we present the Basilica’s new web portal – realized thanks to the generous collaboration of the Assist Group – and Saint Peter’s Basilica brought into the virtual space through a virtuous union of technology and humanism, thanks to the gift Microsoft has given us. The two creations, the institutional portal and the virtual Basilica, are the pride and joy of the “digital mission” of the Fabric of Saint Peter.

I will present briefly the Portal of the Basilica, a true ecosystem in which diverse technologies converge: an integrated platform, with an open and scalable architecture, Mobile First, which anyone can access.

In the metaphor of the starry sky, the portal represents the astronomical observatory. You will find first of all the astrolabe, capable of indicating the flow of visitors in real time, suggesting visit itineraries, inspiring the spiritual journey through the proposal of specific itineraries and encouraging the choice of visits at favourable times and days. A sort of orientation map is offered, with an access booking platform, a service app and digital audio guides.

Then, the visitor is offered the use of a telescope to view the life of the Basilica: information and news, documentation and narrations, video and audio material will be online. The telescope will show art-historical and spiritual content, will use AI for in-depth information, and will be able to zoom in on the historical archive, open “medallions” on news, provide access to the new Journal, *Piazza San Pietro*, and so on.

Finally, a telescope will be available, a powerful instrument capable of penetrating into hidden meanings and bringing one into closer contact. It will offer a 3D photogrammetric view of the Basilica, a number of immersive itineraries, an educational programme modelled on Minecraft, streaming of celebrations, podcasts with meditations, etc. The purpose of the telescope, which we have shared with Dr. Brad Smith since our first meeting in front of Michelangelo’s *Pietà* two years ago, is the unveiling of the inspiration underlying beauty, which, according to Von Balthasar, is intended to “crown, like a halo of elusive splendour, the double star of truth and goodness and their indissoluble relationship”.

The digital ecosystem, which will be active from 1 December, is a container that systematizes technologies, rationalizes and simplifies activities, and can help each pilgrim “experience” the Basilica in its spiritual essence.

The portal is intended to accompany the visitor up to the threshold of the spaceship that will lead him or her to a

spiritual experience. The pilgrim will be able to enter the spaceship of the Church, led by Christ, whose boatswain is Peter with his successor Francis, and its sailors are the people one can meet in the Basilica, either directly (priests, pilgrims, accredited guides, pilgrims...) or through the channels made available in the digital sphere.

If the people entering the Basilica in some way have intuited the Mystery that inspired and radiates it, our mission will have been accomplished.

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