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WORLD MONUMENTS FUND CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF RESTORATION PROJECT AT SANTI QUATTRO CORONATI IN ROME

For Immediate Release—Rome, Italy, May 2, 2006 . . . **Bonnie Burnham, President of the World Monuments Fund (WMF); Bertrand du Vignaud, President of World Monuments Fund Europe; Maria Pia Garavaglia, Deputy Mayor of Rome; and many other distinguished guests are celebrating the completion of the restoration of Santi Quattro Coronati’s cloister garden on Wednesday, May 3, with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting and a special choral arrangement sung by the Augustinian nuns who live in and manage the cloister of Santi Quattro Coronati.** The garden lies within the Santi Quattro Coronati church and convent complex, which is one of the most complete medieval ecclesiastical complexes surviving in Rome.

“This is a great day,” said Ms. Burnham. “Santi Quattro Coronati is one of the most serene places in all of Rome, an oasis of tranquility in the center of this bustling city. We are very happy to have been able to help so substantially to restore this beautiful cloister and its garden, which is the centerpiece of this highly significant site, so rich in art, history, and legend and still active today. We are particularly grateful for the extraordinary generosity of Robert W. Wilson and the Antiqua Foundation. We would also like to thank Vincenzo and Susy Mara for their generous donations made through the Agnus Noster Foundation, Sparaco Spartaco S.p.a. for its support, the Provincia di Roma, and the Getty Foundation which sponsored the preliminary studies for this project.”

“Native Romans, as well as serious travelers, are familiar with the Santi Quattro Coronati monastery,” noted Mr. du Vignaud. “The Augustinian nuns take remarkable care of this medieval ensemble and continue to fill it daily with their beautiful chants and prayers. This is what makes it such a unique and particularly moving site in the heart of Rome. WMF is proud to have been the driving force behind the international campaign to conserve the site, a project which has lasted almost four years and which has been a remarkable accomplishment for the architects, workers, and craftspeople led by the ‘*Sapienza*’ University of Roma, especially Professor Giovanni Carbonara, and the Rome *Soprintendenza* for Historical Monuments. On behalf of WMF, I would like to congratulate them all for this superb achievement, one which is particularly remarkable because almost all of the work has been done underground, resolving the serious humidity problems and drainage issues. When you walk in, you cannot even see the restoration work!”

(more)

Located just steps from the Coliseum and the basilica of St. Clemente, Santi Quattro Coronati was constructed in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, on foundations dating back to the fourth century, and was named for four soldiers martyred under Diocletian. The cloister and church interior were probably the first to be built in the Roman-Cosmatesque style, named for the Cosmati family who, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, advanced a new pattern of decoration that typically employed colorful mosaics and inlaid marble designs. Attached to the southern side of the ancient basilica of the church, the cloister was transferred in the sixteenth century to the Augustinian nuns, in whose care it remains today. In the early twentieth century, the local superintendent for monuments, Antonio Muñoz, restored the cloister in such an exemplary manner that it constitutes one of the most significant restoration projects in Italian history. He placed in the cloister a collection of 300 archeological artifacts that had been found inside the complex, including a precious marble cantharus, probably from the 11th century, that stands in the center of the garden. Muñoz also adorned the perimeter walls with notable funerary inscriptions, stones carved with poetry, and sculptures, dating from Roman times up to the Middle Ages.

Despite this model restoration, by the late twentieth century Santi Quattro Coronati was facing significant threats to its structure: its site on the top of a waterlogged hill, combined with excessive moisture from subterranean water sources, including ancient hydraulic systems and Roman sewers, were rapidly accelerating the deterioration of the complex's exterior stone and plaster work. Air pollution, especially from automobile and bus traffic, has exacerbated the complex's deterioration and so, in order to call international attention to the plight of Santi Quattro Coronati, the World Monuments Fund placed it on its World Monuments Watch list of 100 Most Endangered Sites in 2000 and again in 2002. And, since 2002, WMF has given more than \$800,000 to support the stabilization of the church and convent and the restoration of the cloister.

Several conservation projects have been carried out by the *Soprintendenza*, including WMF's most recent restoration of the cloister's garden. The original design of the garden has been reinstated and its overall level has been lowered in accordance with recent archaeology discoveries, thus re-establishing its original relationship with the architecture. Proper drainage has been installed to protect the historic foundations; a perimeter path has been created while the existing, non-historic paving has been replaced; and the roof drainage has been modified, so that water no longer spills into the cloister. With the completion of this restoration, Santi Quattro Coronati will continue to be an island of tranquility in the center of Rome for both the tourists who come to explore this masterpiece and for the Augustinian nuns who reside in the convent and have administered the basilica since Pius IV (1559-65) gave it into their keeping in the mid-fifteenth century. The order is famous for its beautiful singing, and on Sundays at 11:00 a Mass with music is open to the public.