

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Local art professor to help establish authenticity of presumed da Vinci self-portrait

Dr. David L. Bershada sole member from North America invited to join 14-member scientific team of European experts

**Calgary, AB (April 27, 2010)** – Dr. David L. Bershada, an art history professor at St. Mary's University College and the University of Calgary, will travel to Chieti, Italy in May as part of a team of experts to assess the authenticity of a recently discovered and presumed self-portrait of Leonardo da Vinci.



The oil-on-panel portrait, known as "The Acerenza Portrait," will be officially unveiled on May 8 during a conference at the Biomedical Science Museum, University of Chieti. Measuring 24 inches by 17 inches, the piece of art was discovered in 2009 by medieval historian Dr. Nicola Barbatelli while he was studying the picture collection of a family in Acerenza in southern Italy. If indeed a likeness of the Renaissance genius, the portrait shows da Vinci in middle age with piercing blue eyes, a long nose, long graying hair and a droopy moustache.

The scientific team charged with examining the portrait is headed by Dr. Luigi Capasso from the University of Chieti-Pescara, who is considered the leading expert in the scientific examination of da Vinci's works. Only one self-portrait of da Vinci, a chalk sketch from 1512 at the Biblioteca Reale in Turin, is widely accepted as authentic.

"This is a remarkable tribute to Dr. Bershada who is a very distinguished art historian," said Dr. Terry Downey, President of St. Mary's University College. "We are fortunate indeed to have him in the university community in this city. The fact that he is the only expert from North America is an indication of his scholarly standing."

Dr. Bershada received his AB from Stanford University and PhD Magna Cum Laude from the University of California at Los Angeles. He has taught at UCLA, Loyola University, Arizona State University, University of Calgary and St. Mary's University College and is a former Fulbright Fellow to Rome. Dr. Bershada won 12 teaching awards and has been cited in Maclean's magazine Teaching Supplement as among the outstanding teachers of Canada. He has published or presented over 60 papers and books and is considered one of the world's authorities on 17th century Italian art. One of his publications, *The Christian Travelers Guide to Italy*, published by Zondervan, the largest Christian press in North America, is a best seller.

#### About St. Mary's University College

St. Mary's University College is a Catholic post-secondary, liberal arts and sciences teaching and research institution open to all faiths and traditions. St. Mary's offers Bachelor of Arts degrees, a Bachelor of Education (Elementary) degree and university courses in 33 academic disciplines. For more information, visit [www.stmu.ab.ca](http://www.stmu.ab.ca)

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