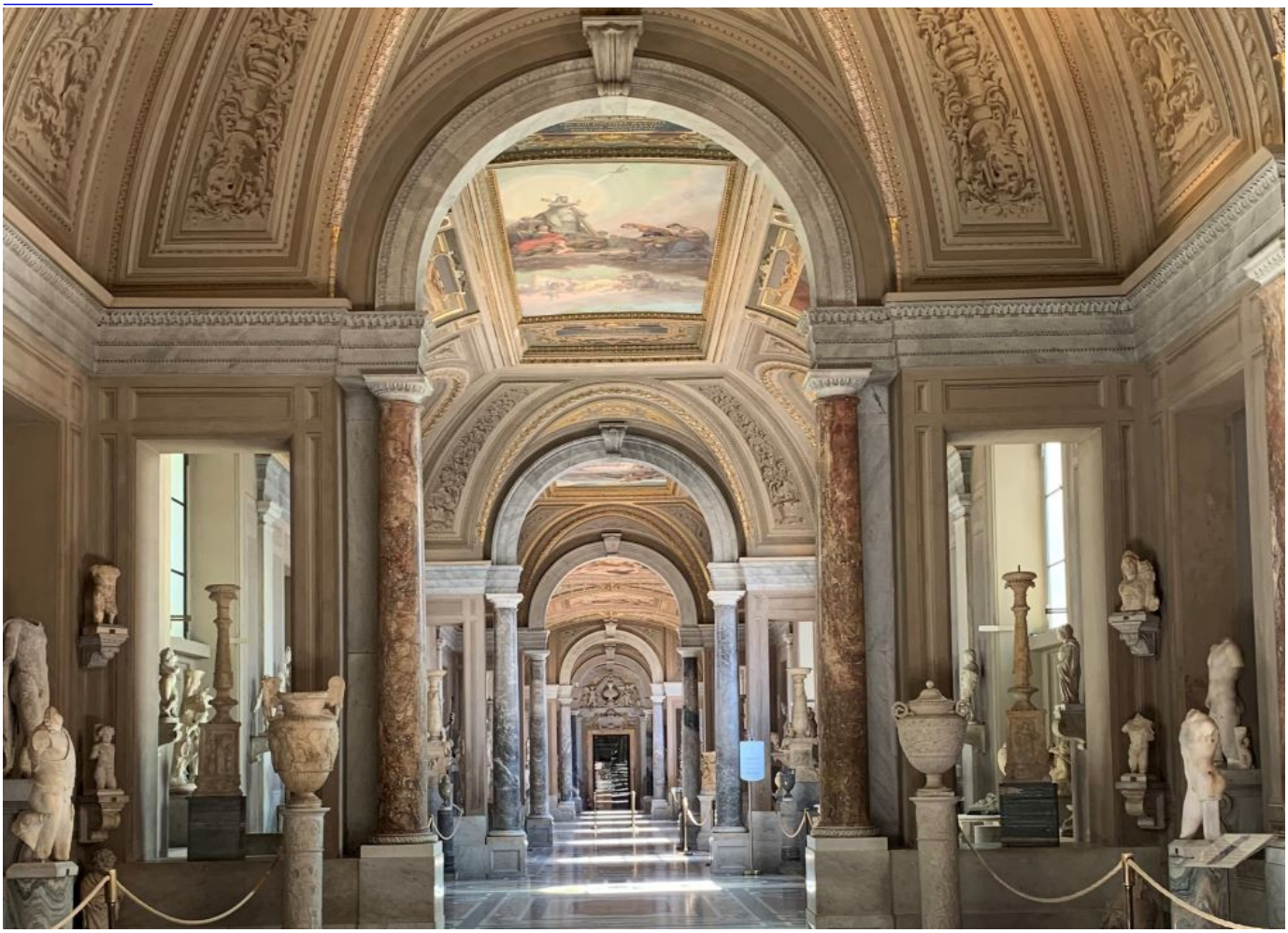
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The entrance to the Chiaramonti gallery, which houses one of the Vatican Museums' many art collections, is seen in this 2020 file photo. (CNS/Cindy Wooden)

Cindy Wooden

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Vatican City — March 12, 2024
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The Vatican City appeals court upheld the conviction of two Italian climate activists who glued their hands to an ancient sculpture in the Vatican Museums.

Guido Viero, 62, and Ester Goffi, 26, were found guilty in June on charges of damaging a "public monument of inestimable historical and artistic value" when, in August 2022, they glued their hands to the base of the statue of Laocoön and His Sons, a sculpture believed to date to the first century B.C.



The statue of Laocoön and His Sons is seen in the Vatican Museums in this file photo from Nov. 21, 2007. The sculpture was the target of an August 2022 protest to draw attention to climate change. (CNS/Paul Haring)

The Vatican's criminal court had ordered the two climate activists to pay more than $30,000 in damages for their protest, which was designed to draw attention to the effects of climate change. They also were given a nine-month suspended prison sentence and suspended fines, both of which will not be imposed if they commit no crimes in the Vatican in the next five years.

The Vatican City State court of appeals rejected their appeal on March 12 and confirmed their sentences in full.

The group they belong to, *Ultima Generazione* (Last Generation), said in an Instagram post March 12 that "Ester and Guido glued themselves to the base of the Laocoön to bring attention to the climatic collapse we are facing and to the need for prompt action. Motivated by the pontiff's own words, they decided to act."

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At the trial, Goffi, who holds degrees in art conservation, said she had consulted with restoration professionals to ensure they would not damage the priceless sculpture, but the head of the Vatican Museum's marble restoration laboratory said that the corrosive adhesive used to glue the activists' hands to the sculpture resulted in permanent, exterior damage to its base, which has since been covered.

The base is not part of the original sculpture and is only about 100 years old.