

Vatican Notes

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SAINT GABRIEL ISSUED

On February 22, 1956, the Vatican released the long awaited airmail issue announced many months ago.

The original plan to depict angels on the Ponte San Angelo was abandoned in favor of a series depicting the Archangel Gabriel, patron of postal and telecommunication workers. Miss Casmira Dabrowska, designer of the issue, skillfully chose famous paintings of three of the 15th century's most famed artists, Melozzo da Forli, Leonardo di Vinci, and Pietro Cavallini.

Each of these artists had painted the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and it was from this artistic work that the designs were adopted from. The 5, 25, and 60 L. values depict the Archangel Gabriel as he appeared in the painting by Melozzo da Forli. The 10, 35, and 100 L. stamps depict the Archangel as he appeared in the work of Pietro Cavallini. The 15, 50, and 300 lire stamps bears a likeness of the Archangel Gabriel as Leonardo di Vinci depicted him.



The stamps were printed from engraved plates of the firms of V. Nicastro, Inc. (5, 25, and 60 lire); F. Pagani, Inc. (10, 35, and 100 lire); and M. Colombati, Inc. (15, 50, and 300 lire). They were released in sheets of 45 stamps (9x5) without any form of marginal inscriptions. Printing was done at the State Printing Office in Rome.

The stamps were intended to replace the airmail issue of 1947 and provide for the higher rates of the revised airmail matter. It is possible that the airmail stamps of 1953 which depict St. Peter's Dome will be replaced by new designs. If rumors prove correct, if the high values are released, and along with a few other "ifs" we might be able to add the last of the three archangels mentioned in the Bible, St. Michael, to our albums. The story of St. Gabriel appears elsewhere in this issue.

Congratulations to the Rev. Aloysius S. Horn, President of the St. Gabriel Philatelic Academy, world famous for his Madonna on Stamps articles, and member of the Vatican Philatelic Society!! Father Horn has been awarded the Cross of St. Gabriel by the Strambian Philatelic Society of Australia. Norman Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, said the honor was bestowed on the Ohio priest for his accomplishments in the "field of religious philately."

A vote of thanks is well deserved by the Rev. Herbert A. Phinney, Vice President of the Vatican Philatelic Society. Father Phinney's one man campaign has accounted for well over fifty new members of VPS and many more in the making. In addition to this wonderful recruitment, Father Phinney has provided a complete membership roster, preparing, printing, and mailing it to all members. Without his efforts the first portion of the Vatican catalog which appeared in the Vatican Notes could not have been possible. Every member can be proud to have an officer of the caliber of Father H. A. Phinney.

Because of the unsatisfactory handling of the last issue of Vatican Notes we have engaged a new printer for your society publication. This is the last effort we can make to speed the Notes to you each month. The last bottleneck seems to be the United States Post Office Department. The last issue was mailed in Detroit on February 23rd, three days later members in the Detroit area still had not received them. The officers have made every endeavor to speed the Notes to you. Now we need your help. A letter to the Postmaster General by each of our members should help speed the handling of the Notes. Don't leave it up to the next fellow, write today!

POPE NICHOLAS V



Pope Nicholas V

Angelico painting. Through an oversight, the halo, which was a mark of sainthood and intended for Pope St. Sixtus III was incorporated into the stamp design. This seems to indicate that Nicholas V was also a saint. This is not true. Though he lead a holy life he has not as yet been canonized. Vatican collectors should bear this in mind when preparing write-ups for their albums.

To the left we illustrate the actual photograph the designer, Edmondo Pizzi, used in preparing the design for the Pope Nicholas V commemoratives.

The photograph is a detail of the painting, "St. Lawrence receiving the treasures of the Church from Pope Sixtus II." This is another Fresco in the Pope Nicholas V Chapel in the Vatican by Fra Angelico.

When Fra Angelico painted the frescos in the Chapel of Nicholas V he had no way of knowing the features of Pope Sixtus II. To depict this Pontiff in his paintings he used the features of Pope Nicholas V, the reigning Pontiff. Fra Angelico added a halo to the painting to signify that Pope Sixtus II was canonized a saint.

When the likeness of Nicholas V was needed for the stamp design it was taken from the Fra

The VPS is finally finishing to forecast material promised to members interested in Roman States philately. The first portion will appear in the Notes upon conclusion of a serialized presentation of the story behind the stamps of 1929-39 issued by Vatican City. A two page column dealing with Roman States will appear each month in the Notes. This will commence during April or May. We plan to print Roman States material on a percentage basis determined by the percentage of VPS members who are collecting or interested in Roman States. To enable us to arrive at an accurate figure each member collecting this segment

of Vatican philately is urged to register with our Roman States Chairman, Louis Klien 526 Guarantee Trust Building Atlantic City, New Jersey. Give Lou your name, address, VPS number, and the forms of RS that you collect.

CAUTION!

Members are warned that many auction houses are offering rare Roman States essays and proofs. These are offered in various denominations and color combinations. Members should bear in mind that these were in no way connected with the Roman States but are printings of private individuals wishing to take advantage of the collector. If you collect such material bid accordingly, but DO NOT be fooled by the claims made by auction firms or unreliable dealers.

VPS LOCAL CHAPTERS

The first VPS Local Chapter is being formed in the Boston, Massachusetts area. Members interested in obtaining details should contact the Rev. Herbert A. Phinney 377 Walnut Ave. Roxbury 19, Massachusetts.

Now that each member has a roster of VPSers who not study the list and contact those in your area and form a local chapter. Such an organization will enrich your enjoyment in Vatican philately and bring you into friendly contact with others with the same interest. All officers will give every aid we can to help you form a chapter and aid you in planning and enjoyable and informative program. Let us know of your intentions and we will publish them in the Vatican Notes.

Thanks to the many new members resulting from the special edition of Linn's Weekly Stamp News devoted to the VPS, and to the efforts of Father Phinney we are happy to announce that this is the last bi-monthly issue of Vatican Notes in the foreseeable future. The next issue of the Notes will be in April and continue monthly after. You can assure that there will always be a Vatican Notes in your mailbox each month by enrolling at least one more member. Membership blanks are available from our Membership Secretary, William G. Cote 616 Graydon Avenue Norfolk 7, Virginia.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW OF ROSSANO
by Rev. Aloysius Horn



IL FOGLIO DI
SESSANTA
FRANCOBOLLI
VALE
LIRE 600

Corner Block of five of
the St. Bartholomew set

On December 29, 1955 the Vatican issued a set of three stamps to mark the ninth centenary of the death of St. Bartholomew of Rossano.

The design shows Saint Bartholomew to the right on all three stamps, and a general view of the facade of the Monastery Church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin at Grotta-ferrata, a Basilian foundation 11 miles from Rome and 2 miles from Frascati. Grotta-ferrata takes its name no doubt from the iron grating which surrounds or protects the image of the Blessed Virgin in a local church). The figure of St. Bartholomew is taken from an ancient mosaic representing St. Nilus and St. Bartholomew of Rossano still visible in the sanctuary of the abbey church.

The actual founder of the Greek (Basilian) monastery or abbey of Grotta ferrata on the Tuscan plain, St. Nilus, died in the year 1005, and was succeeded as abbot in quick succession by Paul, Cyril, and Bartholomew. They were all personal disciples of Nilus, the last being like him a native of Rossano in Calabria. He is venerated as the lesser founder of the abbey, for St. Nilus and his first two successors were able only to clear the land and begin building, while St. Bartholomew carried the work to its conclusion and firmly established his monks, the Basilians (Eastern Rite), who had been driven from Southern Italy by the Saracen invasions. He made his monastery a center for learned studies and the copying of manuscripts, he himself being very skilled in the art of calligraphy, and he also composed a number of liturgical hymns. But his outstanding work was the Life of his master, St. Nilus, from which he gathered much information about the Italo-Greek monasteries, which were still numerous at that time.

It was St. Bartholomew, who in the last and troublesome years of Pope Benedict IX, after his resignation as Pope, took him in at the Grottaferrata monastery. It was this Pope's grandfather, Count Gregory of Tusculum, who had given the land on which the abbey was built. A kanon in the liturgical office of St. Bartholomew refers to this when it recounts, "When, O father, thou didst see the Roman Pontiff rejected, thou didst persuade him by wise words to give up his throne and to end his days in the happy life of a monk." This Pope was driven from Rome in 1048, and at that time he was only about thirty-six years old. Some authorities have St. Bartholomew dying in 1065; the date of commemoration on the Vatican stamps are 1055. His Feast is kept on November 11th.

The Cardinal Commendatore of the abbey, Giuliano della Rovere (afterwards Pope Julius II), surrounded the abbey with battlements and towers from designs by Bramante, like a mighty fortress. The buildings consist of the palace of the Commandery which contains a rich museum of objects found in excavations in the neighborhood; the Monastery which has a valuable collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts; a school of Paleography; a meteorological observatory, and the church of Santa Maria with a chapel decorated with frescoes by Domenichino representing incidents in the life of St. Nilus and St. Bartholomew. These are in what is called the chapel of St. Nilus.

Of the church consecrated by Pope John XIX in 1024, little can be seen except the mosaics in the narthex and over the triumphal arch, the medieval structures have been covered or destroyed during the "restorations" of various commendatory abbots. In 1874 the building was declared a national monument and in 1903 the church received the rank of Roman Basilica. In 1904, the ninth centenary of the foundation of the abbey, it received a judicious but partial restoration. The beautiful campanile is well worth a visit in itself.

SAINT GABRIEL, ARCHANGEL
-William Wonneberger, Jr.-

"Hail, full of grace the Lord is with thee." The archangel Gabriel in the form and figure of a man spoke these words to Mary, she did not speak. Who was this person? Why the greeting? What was the meaning of it? The messenger of God continued, "Fear not Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and thou shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call him Jesus. He shall be great and called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end." The young virgin was bewildered, why should she be chosen the Mother of the Messiah, she had vowed her virginity to God. Not to doubt the Word of God, Mary said, "How shall this be done, I know not man?" To quiet her anxiety and to assure her that her virginity would be spared, Gabriel answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." To indicate the truth of his word, the archangel told Mary of the conception of St. John with the words, "And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth; she also has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God." To this Mary replied, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word."

This, the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was the last and most important of the four errands recorded in the Scriptures that God had sent his messenger, Saint Gabriel, to perform. It is this errand for which the archangel is most remembered and it was the motif for the designs of the airmail definitive issue released by the Vatican Postal Administration on February 22, 1956. The designs of the stamps were taken from paintings of the Annunciation by Melozzo da Forli, Leonardo di Vinci, and Pietro Cavallini. The detail of each depicting the archangel was used for the design of three of the stamps of the airmail issue. But what of the other three errands St. Gabriel performed for God?

In 554 B.C., while the Israelites were held captive by the Babylonians, Gabriel made his first recorded visit to Daniel, the prophet. Daniel had had a dream of a ram with two horns pushing them against the west, the north, and the south. No beast could withstand the ram nor be delivered from it. The ram did as it pleased and became great. Then out of the west came a he-goat with a horn between its eyes. The he-goat destroyed both of the Ram's

horns and overcame him. God sent the archangel to explain the dream. Gabriel related that the ram symbolized the empire of the Medes and Persians. The he-goat from the west was the king of the Greeks, Alexander the Great, who would destroy the empire as the he-goat had destroyed the ram. This prophecy was fulfilled nearly 200 years later.

At a later date Gabriel again appeared to Daniel as he was praying for the people of Israel. He explained to Daniel the mysterious prophecy of the "seventy weeks" of years that were to pass before the coming of Christ. Gabriel went on and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and its sanctuary.

The third visit of St. Gabriel recorded in the Scriptures was to St. Zachary, a member of the priestly class. It was customary for priests whose week it was to serve in the temple to cast lots to determine which of the various rituals they would perform. Zachary was chosen to offer incense upon the altar in the holy place. While he was alone before the altar executing this rite the angel Gabriel appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar.

At the appearance of the angel, Zachary was troubled and afraid. Gabriel spoke to him and told him that the prayers of the priest and his wife, St. Elizabeth, would be answered. A son would be born to them and he would be called John. Zachary found this hard to believe as he and Elizabeth were advanced in years. Gathering his wits and overcoming his fears, he asked Gabriel for some sort of a sign. Because Zachary had indicated that he doubted this message Gabriel had brought from God, the angel announced that he would be stricken dumb and would not regain his speech until the prophecy had been fulfilled.

Six months after John the Baptist had been conceived Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced that she was to be the Mother of God.

Though Gabriel is mentioned only four times in the Scriptures, Christian tradition holds him to be the unnamed angel who appeared to St. Joseph in a dream to reveal to him the Mystery of the Incarnation and later to flee with his family to Egypt to escape the wrath of the jealous Herod. Gabriel is also thought to be the angel who appeared to the shepherds to announce the Birth of Christ as well as the angel who "strengthened" Christ in the Garden of Gethsemani.

The angel Gabriel is not reserved to those of the Christian faith alone. His name is derived from a Hebrew word meaning, "Hero of God". In Jewish as well as Christian tradition, Gabriel is one of the seven archangels who stand before the Lord.

Those of the Jewish faith venerate him as the angel of Judgment. To Gabriel they attribute the destruction of Sodom and of the host of Sennacherib, as the angel who buried Moses, and is the one appointed to mark the figure of Tau on the foreheads of the elect. In later Jewish literature the names of angels were regarded as having a peculiar curing power. The British Museum possesses some magic bowls inscribed with Aramaic, Hebrew, and Syriac incantations, in which the names of Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael occur. These bowls were found at Hillah, the site of Babylon, and constitute interesting relics of the Jewish captivity.

Gabriel is also known to the religion of Islam. Mohammedans believe him to be the angel who served as the mouthpiece of God in dictating the Koran to their prophet, Mohammed.

Saint Gabriel, the archangel, whose feast is celebrated by the Catholic Church on March 24th, has a special meaning to philatelists. As a messenger of God, he was chosen as the patron of postal and telecommunications workers, the messengers of the people.

In 1954, the Reverend Aloysius S. Horn of Fremont, Ohio, with the assistance of Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York founded the St. Gabriel Philatelic Academy, an honor society of outstanding philatelists the world over who are engaged in the study and research of religious stamps. Each year, on March 24th, the feast of St. Gabriel, diplomas are awarded to new members who have attained the honor of membership in this philatelic organization.