



Maria Legionis



Puer Natus Est Nobis

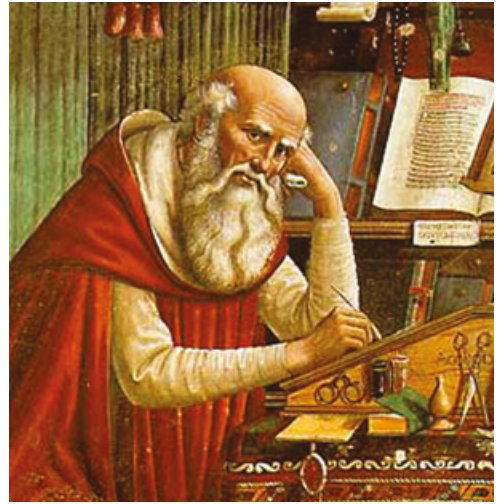
Unto us a Child is Born

ISAIAH 9:6

SAINT JEROME

By Michael Walsh

347 AD - 420 AD
(Translator of the Vulgate Bible)



Jerome was born at the village of Štrigova (Stridon), located 19 kilometres north-west of Čakovec, Međimurje County, in the north of Croatia.

At about the age of twelve he travelled to Rome to study grammar, philosophy and rhetoric, and as a result may have considered a career in law. During his teen years Jerome engaged in the uninhibited lifestyle of some of the students in Rome, but later regretted his actions. Suffering from remorse, on Sundays he began visiting the sepulchers of the martyrs and the Apostles in the catacombs in search of peace, but instead he found that the crypts reminded him of the next life and of hell. His subsequent stage of education came from Aelius Donatus, a well-known Roman teacher. From him, the young Jerome learned Latin and Greek. At around this time Jerome had a companion named Bonosus, who was a Christian influence on his

life and a factor in his turning towards Christianity and changing his lifestyle.

In about the year 366, Jerome was baptised by Pope Liberius. Now interested in theological subjects, he set aside secular studies to pursue matters of the faith, travelling with Bonosus to Trier which had schools for him to gain ecclesiastical training.

370 Jerome visited a monastery at Aquileia which was supervised by Bishop St. Valerian, and which had attracted some bright intellectuals. While in Aquileia, Jerome met a monk named Rufinis, who later became known for his translations of Greek works into Latin. The two men became friends and at this monastery Jerome honed his skills as a translator.

Following his time in Aquileia, Jerome travelled to Treves, Gaul where he began to translate books with the view to building a personal library.

373 He returned to Aquileia and while there had a dispute with his friend Bonosus, after which Bonosus went to an island in the Adriatic and lived as a hermit for a time.

374 Jerome arrived in Antioch after making several stops along the way. While in that city, he began writing his first work: 'Concerning the Seven Beatings.' That same year, disease made Jerome feel unwell. During his illness, he experienced visions which resulted in making him more spiritual.

375 Jerome began a two-year search for inner peace as a hermit in the desert of Chalcis, south-west of Antioch. Speaking only Latin, he was faced with Syriac and Greek. He found desert food unpalatable, but claimed to be happy. He prayed much to ward off temptation. During this time, Jerome learned Hebrew from a Jewish convert and studied Greek, had manuscripts copied for his library and his friends, and carried on correspondence with various people.

After returning to Antioch he was encouraged by the Church officials to become a priest, but Jerome made clear that this was not his first choice of vocation: he wanted to be a monk or a hermit. However the Church officials in Antioch, as well as Pope Damasus, still wanted him to be ordained.

378 Jerome finally relented on condition that he would not be expected to serve in any ministry and

would still be allowed to pursue his monastic life. Under those conditions he was ordained a priest.

379 Fr. Jerome travelled to Constantinople, where for three years he pursued his scriptural studies under St. Gregory of Nazianzus, a famous theologian. During this time Jerome improved his knowledge of Greek, translating into Latin, fourteen of Origen's homilies and Old Testament books.

382 Jerome went to Rome for a council of the Church and met Pope Damasus, who retained him as his secretary. Jerome distinguished himself before the Pope and assumed a prominent place in his papal councils. He engaged in several debates against various heresies, and promoted the ideal of asceticism to those with whom he was in touch; these included a consortium of women who wanted to live saintly lives. During his stay in Rome, Jerome began translating the Bible from the original Hebrew to Latin, a labour which resulted in what is known as the Vulgate Bible.





Pope Damasus died in 384, and this exposed Jerome to criticism and controversy. Jerome was a sarcastic man of great wit. He became unpopular in certain quarters because of his standpoint on spirituality. While Pope Damasus was alive, he shielded Jerome from criticism, but now Jerome faced the retribution of his adversaries. Non-believers who resented his promotion of the faith and some Christians who opposed his views attacked him with nasty accusations.

385 Jerome left Rome and made a religious pilgrimage to Palestine and to the monastic centres of Egypt; he spent a month with Didymus the Blind in Alexandria before travelling to the Holy Land.

386 Shortly after Jerome's arrival in the Holy Land, several followers from Rome joined him; these included a lady named Paula, who was a wealthy Roman aristocrat. He acted as spiritual director with this group which finally settled in Bethlehem where they set about establishing a monastery. By 389, a monastic site was established in Bethlehem under Jerome's supervision and with financial assistance from the Roman aristocrat, Paula. The monastery included a separate convent under Paula's supervision, and a hostel for pilgrims. Jerome lived in the monastery until his death.

420 Jerome died on 30th September. His remains, originally buried under the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, were later transferred to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.



Saint Jerome, former Secretary to Pope Damasus, and translator of the Hebrew Bible into Latin, now known as the Vulgate Bible, is the Patron Saint of biblical scholars, students, librarians, archaeologists, and translators.

His Feast Day falls on 30th September