

## ARTY CATS, *continued*

### Saint Jerome & the Lion

By Greg Balagian

Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius or Saint Jerome (c. 347-420 AD), was a Roman Catholic priest, theologian and historian best known for his translation of the Bible. He was born in Dalmatia, in present day Croatia.

Saint Jerome is often depicted with a lion by his side. In the legendary tale, he is said to have removed a thorn from a lion's paw. The grateful feline became his longtime companion.

"The old trick of removing a thorn was a well known technique of lion-taming in the ancient world."\* Aesop wrote that Androcles was spared in the arena when a lion recognized him as the one who had removed a thorn from his paw.

Saint Gerasmus also was said to have tamed a lion. Some authorities speculate that the story became associated with Jerome due to their similar names.

Many paintings and sculptures depict St. Jerome with a lion; at least eight of them appear on stamps.

Italian artist, Niccolo Antonio Colantonio painted *St. Jerome Removing Thorn from Lion's Paw* (1445) in oil on panel (1973 Rwanda Scott 508). The painting is located in the National Museum of Capodimonte, Naples. Fig. 1.

The most recent stamp on this theme is from Grenada Carriacou & Petite Martinique, issued earlier this year and depicts Italian Renaissance artist Giovanni Bellini's *St. Jerome in the Desert* (c. 1450). St. Jerome is commanding help to extract a thorn from the injured lion's paw. Fig. 2.

Bellini's egg tempera\*\* painting on a panel is at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, England.

Fig. 1. The lion is a prominent figure in the painting, *St. Jerome Removing Thorn from Lion's Paw* by Colantonio, 1973 Rwanda Scott 508.



*St. Jerome in the Wilderness* (c. 1496), by Albrecht Dürer from the High Renaissance, is at the National Gallery, London. Central African Republic issued a souvenir sheet with the oil on panel painting in 2011. Fig. 3.

German Gothic artist Nikolaus Hagenauer sculpted a wood detail of Isenheim Altarpiece (1512-16) in Colmar, France. In 2012, France issued a sheet of three stamps commemorating the 500th anniversary of the illustrious altarpiece. St. Jerome and the small lion, crouched near him dog-like, are on the right side panel (Scott 4271b). Fig. 4. [Listing on page 123.]

*St. Jerome in his Study* (1514) is an engraving by Dürer located in the Clark



Fig. 2. Bellini's *St. Jerome in the Desert* is on a stamp from Grenada Carriacou & Petite Martinique issued in earlier in 2013.

Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. The work is on two stamps: 1967 Panama Scott C357 and 1996 Grenada Grenadines Scott 1812. Fig. 5.

*Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg as St. Jerome in the Wilderness*, oil on panel (1527), by German artist Lucas Cranach the Elder, has a resting lion in the foreground. The panel is housed in Gemaldegalerie museum in Berlin. Grenada Grenadines issued a 2003 souvenir sheet with the painting, Scott 2460 [shown on page 115.]

*The Holy Family with St. Jerome, Female Martyr and the Infant St. John the Baptist*, (c.1552-55), oil on wood panel, was painted by Italian Renaissance artist, Prospero Fontana (1980 Australia Scott 757). A very small lion is at the bottom left corner. The panel is at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

*St. Jerome in the Wilderness* (1625-27) is an oil on canvas painting by Flemish Baroque artist Anthony van Dyck, with the lion sleeping contently at the bottom left side (2000 Grenada Scott 2929). The painting is in the Dresden State Art Collection, Dresden, Germany.

St. Jerome and the lion is a popular theme and more stamps in the future are certainly possible. 🐾

\*A Catholic Notebook, "St. Jerome and the Lion."

\*\*Egg tempera is dried pigment mixed with raw egg yolk and distilled water.



**Fig. 3. *St. Jerome in the Wilderness* by Albrecht Dürer, is on a 2011 souvenir sheet from Central African Republic. The lion is resting behind St. Jerome.**

**Fig. 4. Nikolaus Hagenauer's sculpted wood detail of St. Jerome and the lion on the Isenheim Altarpiece, is on France 4271b issued in 2012.**



**Fig. 5. *St. Jerome in his Study* (1514) is a High Renaissance engraving by German artist Albrecht Dürer. The lion is resting beside a lamb in the foreground of the selva, 1996 Grenada Grenadines 1812.**

Greg Balagian's  
two-volume ATA handbook,  
*Wild Cats in Art*,  
has been updated and will  
soon be available on CD.