

Jerome
Priest, Teacher of the Faith
Translator of the Scriptures

September 30

Jerome was the foremost Biblical scholar of his day, his contribution to the translation of Scripture into Latin, the “Vulgate Version”, being the work for which he is best known.

He was born in Stridon in northern Italy of well-to-do Christian parents about 347. As a student in Rome he became a convinced Christian and received baptism. The ascetic life-style of a monk seemed to many at that time to represent the Christian way for the committed disciple. While on a trip through Gaul, Jerome decided to adopt that discipline. To follow this way even more thoroughly, Jerome went first to Antioch and then into the Syrian desert where there were many other hermits and monks. It was not a happy experience. Jerome’s pugnacious style in the theological controversies of the time did not help.

However, Jerome was a brilliant student. In the course of his studies he had mastered Hebrew as well as Greek. He was in Rome from 379 to 382 and became private secretary to Pope Damasus, who commissioned Jerome to produce a Latin translation of the Bible. While in Rome, Jerome vigorously promoted monasticism and the ascetic way, and found a sympathetic hearing among some aristocratic Roman matrons. Jerome’s lack of tact gained him enemies, and when Damasus died Jerome found it politic to leave Rome.

Accompanied by Paula and Eustochium, two of the Roman matrons he had counselled, Jerome went back to the east and eventually established a monastery in Bethlehem, where he lived until his death in 420. The Roman matrons lived in a convent nearby.

Jerome devoted his great energies to his work on the Scriptures, not only producing the requested translation, but many commentaries and other works, demonstrating a breadth of reading and scholarship that was quite outstanding. Jerome was less at home in the theological field than the biblical, though that never prevented him from taking up the cudgels on behalf of what he deemed to be correct.

Jerome’s propensity for extravagant and even vitriolic debate led him into a number of quarrels, including a bitter parting of the ways from his old friend Rufinus. Nevertheless, Jerome was an ardent champion of orthodoxy, a master of Latin style, and never sought high position in the church or personal honours of any kind. The “Vulgate” translation, so called because it was the “common” or “well known” version (*editio vulgata*) of the Bible, included much of Jerome’s work. It became standard in the Latin church for centuries.

For Liturgical Use

Jerome was born in northern Italy about 347. He was attracted to the monastic life and promoted it vigorously. He was a skilled linguist and was asked to translate the Bible into Latin from Hebrew and Greek. He established a monastery in Bethlehem in 382 and from there wrote the translation of Scripture as well as many commentaries, sermons and letters. Much of his translation of Scripture was incorporated in what became known as the Vulgate Bible. His belligerent style led him into many quarrels, but his gifts of scholarship were outstanding. He died in 420.

Sentence

How sweet are your words to my taste, O Lord, sweeter than honey in my mouth.

Psalm 119:103

Collects

Everliving God,
we give you thanks for your servant Jerome,
who with zealous care
translated the Scriptures;
and we pray that through your Spirit
the words we read may show us Christ the living word
and shape our discipleship in his name;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Jesus, Word of God,
you call disciples of every kind,
amongst them the rigid and cantankerous;
we thank you for Jerome's amazing work,
which opened your word
for everyone to read.

Psalms 119:105-112 119:129-136

Readings

Nehemiah 8:1-3,9-12	Understand what is read
2 Timothy 3:10-17	Learned in the Scriptures
Luke 24:44-48	The message of the Scriptures

Post Communion Sentence

Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

John 6:63