

Vatican Notes

Volume VIII

March - April 1960

Number 5

VATICAN CITY PHILATELIC NEWS

February 29, 1960 saw the release of two new sets, as scheduled. The two value set for the Roman Synod, 15 lire and 60 lire, were designed by Grasselini. The design is the same for both values, showing the transept of the Basilica of St. John Lateran and, in the opinion of your Editor, is a really bad example of photogravure dullness.

The second set was to commemorate the Fifth Centenary of the Death of St. Antoninus of Florence. This consisted of four values, 15, 25, 60 and 110 Lire. A statue and portion of a relief are each used on two of the values. The statuary is the work of Dupre and Portigiani. This set also was designed by Grasselini and is a beautiful example of printing by rotary-recess. The engraver of the 15 lire and 60 lire values is M. Canfarini and the engraver of the 25 lire and 110 lire values is A. Queti.

Two more sets are to be put in circulation during the first part of April. Due to appear on April 7th is the ' World Refugee Year ' set of six stamps: 5, 10, 25, 60, 100 and 300 lire. This set will be valid for only about three months or until June 30th, 1960; this date being the closing date of the Refugee Year. Three great masterpieces of Italian painting will be featured: Masaccio's ' St. Peter Giving Alms ', Piero della Francesca's ' Madonna of the March ', and Fra Angelico's ' Flight to Egypt '.

Scheduled for April 11th is the long-awaited set marking the transfer of the body of Pope St. Pius X from Rome to Venice and return. The values will be 15, 35 and 60 lire with each portraying a different scene: the departure of St. Pius X from Venice when he was elected to be Pope, the solemn funeral in St. Mark's Square, and Pope John XXIII kneeling beside the glass-walled coffin of St. Pius X. The set will be designed by Casimira Dabrowska and printing will be by rotary-recess.

With the issuance of the Pope St. Pius X set will end the backlog of Vatican issues resulting from the death of Pope Pius XII. This will also be the end, or so it is reported, of the current policy of having dual first days for two different issues.

Reported to be in the final stages is a new regular series of 13 values depicting various masterpieces of Michelangelo and Raphael which are in the Vatican museums.

Also, in the planning process, is a new set of Postage Due stamps and high values to supplement the Obelisk set of last year.

The Pope John XXIII Coronation Set is sold out at the Vatican. This brings up a story as reported to your President Wm. Wonneberger Jr. It shows how Pope John XXIII cast aside his personal preference in order to protect the interests of the stamp collecting world. The Pope did not like the coronation stamps and was desirous of having the issue withdrawn. After his advisors explained the philatelic consequences of such an action he consented to leave them on sale.

VPS LOCAL CHAPTER NEWS

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER:

The NUNCIO

monthly bulletin of the



Volume 1

APRIL, 1960

Number 10

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

Shown above is the mask-head of the official monthly bulletin of this Chapter. All issues continue to be full of pertinent news, for the members, and 'Barney' Barnett and his fellow workers are again to be congratulated on a swell job that is being done.

GREATER ST. LOUIS CHAPTER: This unit, of the VPS, continues to have a great variety of programs at their meetings. Your Editor, who naturally is a member of this chapter, was invited to give an address on 'Vatican Philately' to the membership of the Webster Groves, Missouri Stamp Club on Jan. 22nd. This is a suburb of St. Louis. Mention is made of this because of the response that was received from the members of a general stamp club. The reception, and questions afterwards, showed that a lot of erroneous information is believed, by general collectors, on the philatelic situation of the Vatican. Many false ideas were cleared up, it is hoped, and it may a good idea, once in awhile, for informed collectors to appear before other general stamp groups in other localities.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE VATICAN PHILATELIC SOCIETY.

A great number of VPS members have been petitioning the Vatican Philatelic Society to help stop the small printings of Vatican stamps, help improve the poor quality of printing, etc.

A better than even chance has been arranged to see that the opinions of Vatican collectors will be taken under serious consideration.

Here is what to do:

- (a). Send your letters to William Wonneberger Jr., 320 First Avenue, Stratford, Connecticut.
- (b). Include nothing else in the letter but your comments of the Vatican policy.
- (c). Be sure to give your full name and address.
- (d). Be concise, polite, and make no wild statements.
- (e). Make no demands: offer only suggestions and make any of your suggestions intelligent ones.
- (f). Remember: your letter represents you and your country. Write it accordingly.

A handful of letters won't help the situation, we need hundreds.

If everyone writes, perhaps the Vatican philately policy will be altered to please the majority.

Let's remember too: the complaints received have only been against a small facet of the overall postal problems. Vatican stamps are still among the best, free of all 'Outside Influences', appropriate, and are of subjects worthy of commemoration. Let's state these too and compliment the Vatican for them.

Your letter will not be summarized or used to conduct a poll. It will be sent to the proper Official.

Many have expressed their complaints to other collectors, dealers, etc.

Now make your constructive criticism where it will do some good.

No deadline, as far as date, is being set but all members are asked to write their letters as soon as they receive this copy of the Vatican Notes.

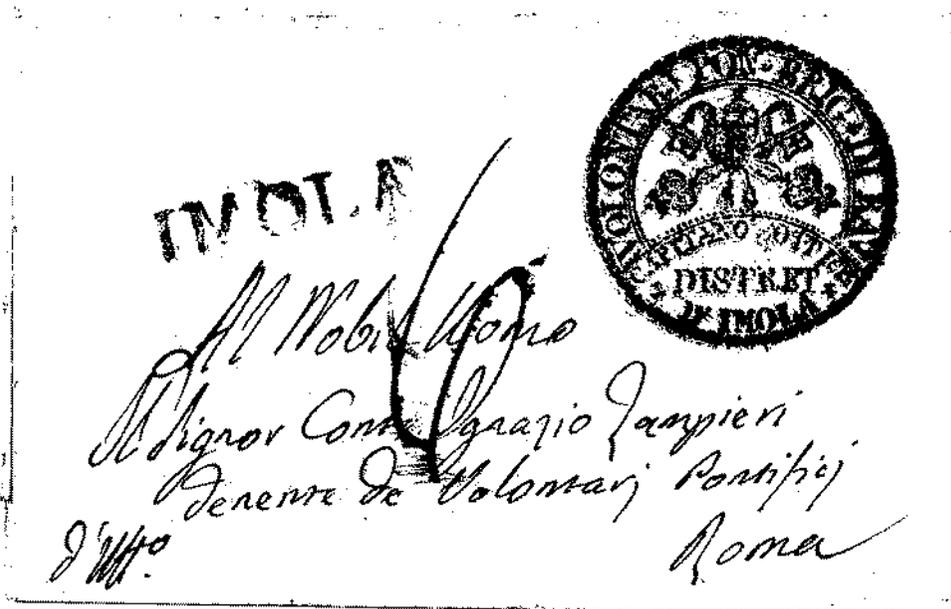
Dues Notice

All Vatican Philatelic Society dues are due by July 1, 1960.

Send your check or money order (made payable to Vatican Philatelic Society) to Wallace R. Smith, 165-15 Union Turnpike, Flushing 66, New York.

Dues are still \$ 2.00 per year and, because of such a nominal amount, individual dues notices are not sent to the membership.

Remember, have your dues paid by July 1, 1960.

WHAT IS THIS?

The above stampless cover is a Pontifical State Military Cover. It is dated January 10, 1834 and has the Cachet of the Voluntary Papal Brigade of Ravenna - Captain of Imola Station. The letter was sent from Imola to Rome.

This Military cover is but one in the collection of your Editor and in the next issue of Vatican Notes a more detailed article will be written.

A Vatican First Flight - to Rio de Janeiro

Very little can be found in print about Vatican First Flights. One exception is the *Catalogo dei Francoboli D'Italia*, 1960 Edition, edited by Aldo D'Urso, Via della Mercede 39, Rome. This appears to be an improved successor of the *Catalogue of Pergolesi*, and continues the listing of Vatican First Flights up to July 21, 1959.

Another exception is the *Catalogo Storico e Descrittivo della Posta Aerea Italiana*, authored by Lucio Sorgoni, edited by Exio Ghiglione, Salita S. Matteo 23, Genova. On pages 88 to 90 of Rag. Lucio Sorgoni's catalogue we find a history of the First Flight from Rome (and Vatican City) to Rio de Janeiro, and Rio to Rome. From this account it would appear that the Rio to Rome First Flight was completed on the same day that the Rome to Rio Flight began, December 21, 1939, a Thursday. The First Flight from Rome was by the airplane I-Arma, and it was completed at Rio de Janeiro on December 24, 1939.

The Italian air line, Ala Littoria, decided to start the *Linee Aeree Transcontinentali Italiane*, because of the successful Rome to Rio flight of the *Scorci Verdi* (Green Mice). The company first established an experimental section under the direct supervision of its president and placed in charge Col. Attilio Biseo and Commander Bruno Mussolini.

To get *Linee Aeree Transcontinentali Italiane* (L. A. T. I.) into operation, it was realized that the Italian line needed the cooperation of two existing air lines, the French ' Air France ' and the German ' *Deutsch Luft Hansa* '. The original route had been planned so that much of the flight as possible would be over land, from Rome (Guidonia) to Marsailles, to Casablanca, to Villa Cisneros, to Dakar, where it would make its overseas hop to Natal. It would then proceed along the coast of Brazil to Rio de Janeiro. By agreement between Ala Littoria, Air France and *Deutsch Luft Hansa*, the latter two were to give full cooperation in operating the route including weather information and radio contact.

The whole operation seemed on the verge of success, when the hint of war in Europe changed government policies to such an extent that in March of 1939 the Italian Ministry of Aeronautics announced that the French Government had cancelled the agreement of Air France with Ala Littoria and *Deutsch Luft Hansa*, concerning cooperation for maintaining the flight route. Moreover France denied, to the proposed Atlantic Line, permission to fly across French colonial territory, and refused visas to the Italian pilots of the planes for the same French colonial territory.

Even though this upset previous plans in subsequent months planning was modified to suit the circumstances and on September 11, L. A. T. I. was established. Its route was divided into three sections: -

1. The European Section:- Rome, Lisbon, Malaga, Villa Cisneros, Isola del Sale (Cape Verde Islands), with four planes assigned.
2. The American Atlantic Section:- Isola del Sale to Pernambuco (Recife) with four planes assigned.
3. The American Section:- Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, with 3 planes assigned.

Much thought was given as to whether airplanes or hydroplanes should be used. Because of the success of the Croceria dei Scorci Verdi, the same type and make of plane was used: airplanes by Savoia-Marchett, S. 83. In early December planes were flown out to the various sections in preparation for the inaugural flight and the operation of the route. For the First Flight a special cancellation was applied at Rome. Still another special cancel was prepared for cancellation " By Courtesy " of mail which neither was flown nor left Rome.

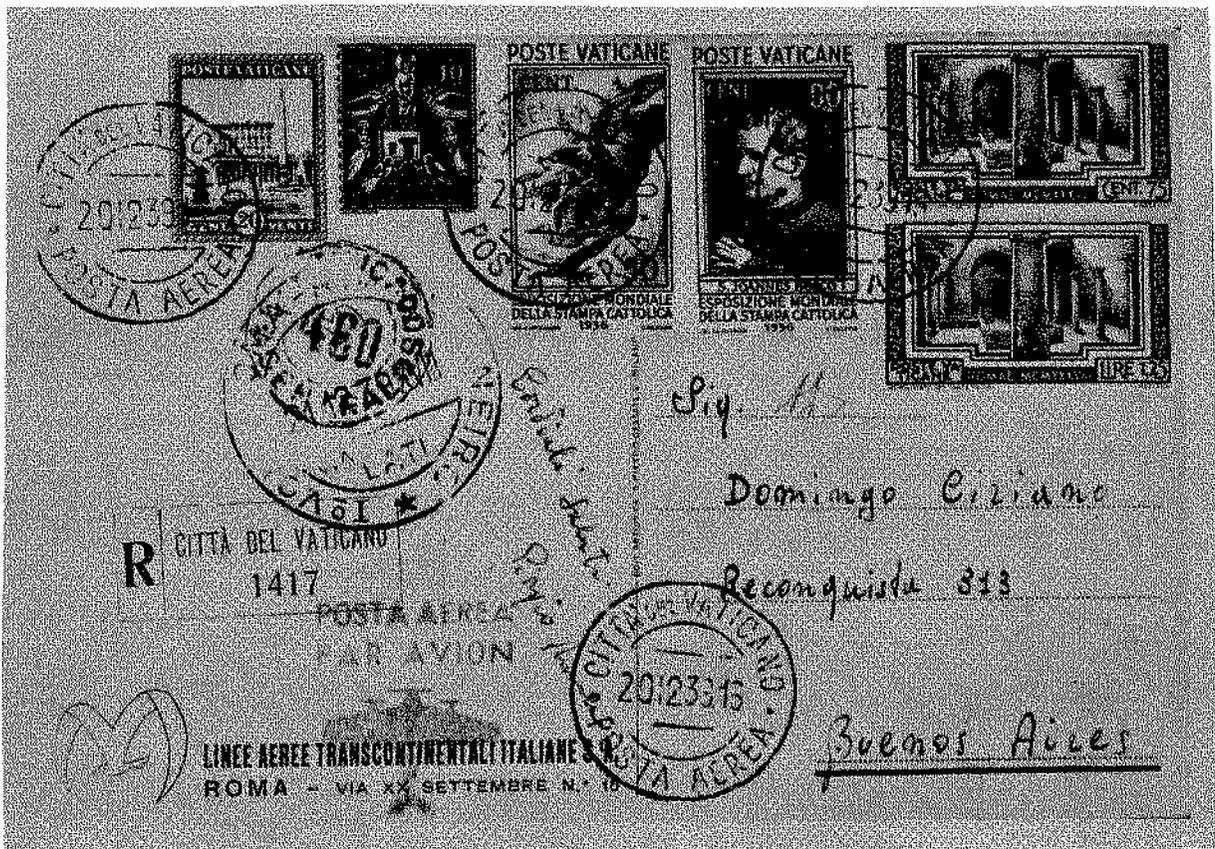
Three covers, from this Vatican First Flight to Rio, have been examined, and are illustrated herein. Two are the property of Mr. Frederick J. Levitsky, (VPS #2), Treasurer of V. P. S. and President of the Eastern Massachusetts Chapter of VPS., and the other is the possession of Rev. Herbert A. Phinney, (VPS #3), Vice-President of V. P. S.. All are franked with Vatican stamps. Mr. Levitsky's consist of (1) a special L. A. T. I. envelope addressed to Dr. Ing. Leonardo Galante of Rio de Janeiro and (2) a special First Flight Postcard addressed to Sig. Domingo Ciziano of Buenos Aires. Fr. Phinney's cover (3) is a plain air-mail envelope addressed to Mr. Glen W. Naves, Spartanburg, S. C.. Each cover started out on the First Flight and was delivered variously in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States.

Because the ' Via Lati ' cancel, on both of Mr. Levitsky's covers, have Via and Lati on different lines, and that of Fr. Phinney has Via and Lati on the same line, it was thought that the latter, which does not correspond to the illustration in the Catalogo of Rag. Lucio Sorgoni of Rome, might be a fake, despite all of the backstamps. Recourse was had to the eminent Italian expert at Rome, Ing. Alberto Diena, who put his mark of authentication (AD) on all three covers.

The first cover mentioned (to Rio) bears 12 Lire in Vatican City stamps and was cancelled at Vatican City on December 20, 1939, with the FF cancel of Via Lati of December 21, 1939. It bears two back stamps, one of Rio de Janeiro of December 24, 1939, and another of the same date but unidentifiable.



The second cover, the special FF card (to Buenos Aires), bears 13 Lire in Vatican City stamps, and was also cancelled at the Vatican on December 20, 1939, with the FF Via Lati cancel of December 21, 1939. What looks like a registration postmark in Spanish or Portuguese is imposed on the Via Lati FF cancel, with the numerals 460 in its center. It was registered at Vatican City and bears Vatican Registered label # 1417.



The third cover (to Spartanburg, S. C.) bears 12.50 Lire of Vatican City stamps, and was cancelled at Vatican City December 19, 1939, the day before the other two covers. It bears the Via Lati FF Cancel of December 21, 1939. It is backstamped at Pernambuco on December 23, 1939, and at Belem-Para on December 24, 1939. Two registered cancels, in red, of Miami, Florida December 26, 1939, are on the back, one imposed on the Belem-Para cancel. This cover was also registered at Vatican City, bearing Vatican registry label # 1324, showing that between the time this cover was registered and our second cover was registered on the following day there were 93 other covers so registered.





If one follows the First Flight route on a world map, once the plane has left Rome and stopped in Lisbon, its flight from Malaga to Rio de Janeiro is almost in a straight line through its stops at Villa Cisneros, Isola del Sale, Pernambuco, Bahia to Rio.

Fra Angelico

On June 27, 1955, the Vatican Postal Administration released a set of two commemoratives to mark the fifth centenary of the death of one of the world's greatest religious painters, Fra Angelico. Though the stamps have not been attributed to any particular designer, it might be said that they were designed by Fra Angelico himself as the design was taken from one of his most celebrated works in the Vatican.

The future Fra Angelico was born in 1387, in Vicchio, Province of Mugello, Tuscany. At baptism, he received the name of Guido, and as his father's name was Pietro, he was known as Guido (or Guidolino) di Pietro. Along with his younger brother, Guido entered the Dominican convent at Fiesole in 1407. Upon entering the convent, he adopted the name of Giovanni and has henceforth been known as Fra Giovanni da Fiesole. His younger brother became known as Fra Benedetto da Fiesole, (or da Mugello). Both brothers began their art careers about this time as illustrators and illuminators of missals and

manuscripts. In 1409, Fra Giovanni and his brother journeyed to Foligino, Umbria, where the Dominicans had established a convent. Five years later a devastating pestilence forced them to move to Corona. While here, Fra Giovanni executed his first extant paintings which are regarded by some as his best pictures.

In 1418, he and his brother returned to Fiesole where he spent sixteen years. It was during this period that Fra Giovanni painted four small panels, the most important of which is known as the "Madonna of The Star". He also executed a celebrated predella, or altarpiece, called, "Christ in Glory surrounded by Saints and Angels" which contained over 250 distinct figures. Among the many fine pieces he painted during this Fiesolan period are the "Coronation of the Virgin" and two of the "Last Judgement".

In 1431, Fra Angelico began the "Madonna of the Linen Weavers" which contained famous representations of twelve angels making music. This painting might be considered a turning point in his career. Prior to this, his work had been typically medieval in character, but now his paintings began to reflect the influence of the new techniques and themes introduced by the Renaissance.

In 1436, the Dominicans acquired the Convent of San Marco in Florence for their order. The convent was under the extremely generous patronage of Cosmo de' Medici, and Fra Angelico was invited to decorate the convent. Some claim that his brother, Fra Benedetto, assisted him in executing these famous frescos before he became superior of San Domenico, an office he held until his death in 1448.

During his stay in Florence, Fra Angelico came under the influence of such famous Italian artists as the Michelozzo who designed the buildings of San Marco, and the painter Masaccio. The Florentine period of Fra Angelico was responsible for such noted frescos as "Christ as a Pilgrim", the "Crucifixion", and the "Transfiguration". Pope Eugenius IV summoned him to Rome in 1445, to paint frescos in the Chapel of the Sacrament, which has since been destroyed by fire. In 1447, at the request of Eugenius IV, Fra Angelico and his pupil the Florentine painter Benozzo Gozzoli, journeyed to Orvieto to work in the Chapel of the Madonna de San Brizio in the Cathedral of Orvieto. He did not finish this work however but returned to Rome in the fall of the same year. The chapel was finished by Luca Signorelli some time later.

In 1448, at the request of Pope Nicholas V, successor of Eugenius IV, Fra Angelico was commissioned to paint a series of frescos depicting scenes in the lives of Saints Stephen and Lawrence. It was from this series, the last executed by Fra Angelico, that the design of the stamps was taken. The scene, depicted on the stamp, is St. Lawrence being ordained Deacon by Pope Sixtus II. So faithfully has the center of this fresco been reproduced on the stamps that we can say that Fra Angelico was the designer of the stamps marking the anniversary of his death.

In 1449, Fra Angelico was appointed superior of his old convent in Fiesole where he labored until his death six years later. His earthly remains were transported to Rome where he was buried in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

Fra Giovanni da Fiesole earned the title of "Fra Angelico" not only for his dedication to painting religious subjects, but for his personal characteristics of sincerity, goodness and piety. He always began his works with a prayer. With the aid of the Almighty, it is no wonder that his works are held in such high esteem. As a painter, Fra Angelico attained his most notable effects in his representation of devout facial expressions. He was a greatly skilled colorist and master of the technical problems such as the transferring of movements and perspective to canvas. He was also the first to paint the Christ Child in a realistic manner and the first Renaissance artist, of which he was the greatest, to paint landscapes which can still be identified as actual places today. This is the man we remember as, "Blessed Fra Angelico Giovanni da Fiesole".