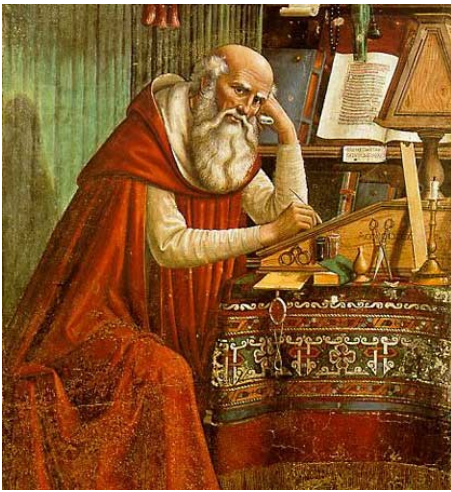




St Jerome

Before he was known as Saint Jerome, he was named Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus. He was born around 342 AD. Today, the town, which ceased to exist in Jerome's time, would likely be in Croatia or Slovenia. The young Jerome learned Latin and Greek. Little else is known of his childhood other than his parents were probably well-to-do and Christian. Despite their efforts to raise Jerome properly, the young man behaved as he chose.

Around the age of 12 or so, Jerome travelled to Rome to study grammar, philosophy and rhetoric. It is likely that due to his training in rhetoric, he may have considered a career in law. By his own admission, he quickly forgot his morals. While he was not studying, Jerome pursued pleasure. In particular, he pursued women, even though he knew his behaviour was wrong.

To alleviate the feelings of guilt he often felt afterwards, Jerome would visit the crypts in Rome imagining himself in hell. He did so every Sunday, even though he was not a Christian. Jerome succeeded in frightening himself, but not in changing his ways.

Fortunately, Jerome had as a companion, Bonosus, who was a Christian influence. His influence is part of what persuaded Jerome to become a Christian and change his ways for the better.

In or around the year 366, Jerome decided to become a Christian and was baptized by Pope Liberius. Later he travelled with Bonosus to Trier where there were schools for him to gain ecclesiastical training.

Jerome suffered several bouts of serious illnesses and he also had visions which made him even more religious. He went into the desert to live for four years, living as a hermit.

There is a famous legend which says that he removed a thorn from a lion's paw after which the grateful lion became a constant companion. After he emerged from his hermitage, Jerome was quickly embroiled in conflicts within the Church at Antioch. However after much pressure he agreed to be ordained as a priest and then later became secretary to the Pope.

Jerome was a hard worker and he wrote extensively defending the virginity of Mary, which some clerics dared to question.

Of all the things that made Jerome famous, nothing was so legendary as his translation of the Bible. Jerome began work while he was still in Rome under Pope Damasus. He spent his entire life translating the scriptures from Hebrew into Latin.

Jerome died on September 30, 420. His death was peaceful and he was laid to rest under the Church of the Nativity. His remains were later transferred to Rome.

Saint Jerome is the patron saint of archaeologists, Biblical scholars, librarians, students and translators. His feast day is September 30.