

# The Blue Pencil

DANIEL A. PIAZZA—DPIAZZA3@VERIZON.NET

## 2008 writing award winners

Despite the mix-up involving the list of nominees included with the last issue, reader interest in the *VERITAS* award was very strong. Ninety-eight votes were cast, and Greg Pirozzi won the award with 26 votes for the first installment in his ongoing series on the 1933 Gardens and Medallions issue. The results were as follows:

July-August 2007 (Vol. 56, No. 1)

"*Vatican Scientific and Cultural Institutions-Part III: Vatican Apostolic Library*" (Greg Pirozzi)—9\*

"*Vatican Europa Issues*" (Michael B. Lamothe)—7

September-October 2007 (Vol. 56, No. 2)

"*Vatican Scientific and Cultural Institutions-Part IV: The Vatican Observatory*" (Greg Pirozzi)—9\*

November-December 2007 (Vol. 56, No. 3)

"*Watercolors of Aldo Raimondi*" (Greg Pirozzi)—10

"*Vatican City and the Golden Age of Ocean Liner Travel*" (Greg Pirozzi)—8

January-February 2008 (Vol. 56, No. 4)

"*Le Forme Belle' of Antonio Canova*" (Daniel A. Piazza)—7

"*Vatican Mourning Covers*" (Greg Pirozzi)—12

March-April 2008 (Vol. 56, No. 5)

"*An Interview with Irio Fantini*" (Michael B. Lamothe)—7

"*Vatican Philatelic Ephemera, Part I-Philatelic Show Folders*" (Michael Krejci)—6\*

May-June 2008 (Vol. 56, No. 6)

"*Vatican Philatelic Ephemera, Part II-Philatelic Show Sheets and Cards*" (Michael Krejci)—6\*

"*Eleazar Albin and Vatican City's Only Bird Stamp Issue*" (Matthew V. Cassetta)—6

"*Gardens & Medallions 75th Anniversary Retrospective, Part I*" (Greg Pirozzi)—26

\* multipart article totals have been combined into one figure

I have also established a new Editor's Choice Award to be given, at the discretion of the editor, to an article that demonstrates originality, creativity and initiative in writing about Vatican or Pontifical State philately. (This is along the same lines as the President's Award, which is given by the president and not awarded by vote of the membership.)

Normally, the recipient of the Editor's Choice should not be the same as the winner of the *VERITAS* award.

The recipient of the first *Vatican Notes* Editor's Choice award is Michael B. Lamothe, for his interview with Vatican stamp designer Irio Ottavio Fantini in the March-April 2008 issue. Michael's resourcefulness and initiative in obtaining an interview with Sig. Fantini gave all of us an insight into stamp design selection at the Vatican and led to publication for the first time of several of the artist's drawings, including one unused model.

## Vatican philately in other journals

There have been numerous mentions of Vatican philately in the philatelic press recently. The August 2008 issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly* carried Barbara M. Soper's article "Mosaics on Stamps Reveal Ancient History" (pp. 26-29). She writes that "Rome's embrace of the Christian faith in the last years of the empire...led to many striking mosaics with Christian themes" and illustrates her point with the April 23, 1974 Universal Postal Union Centenary issue and the June 5, 1990 Caritas International set. The author does not make a distinction between the two sets; the 1974 series only *mimics* a mosaic appearance, while the Caritas set shows details from *actual* mosaics preserved in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, Rome. Another section of the article pictures the August 29, 1987 OLYMPHILEX set of four, which shows mosaics from the Caracallan baths in Rome.

Dave Kent's new issues column in the June 13, 2008 issue of *Mekeel's and Stamps Magazine* ("Dave Kent's World," p. 5) caught up with the Vatican's 2007 stamp series celebrating the new philatelic and numismatic museum and the 250th anniversary of the Christian Museum. The former were illustrated in color on the cover of the magazine.

The fourth quarter 2008 issue of the *Philatelic Literature Review*, received in late June from the American Philatelic Research Library, included part twelve of Theodore M. Tedesco's country-by-country bibliography of philatelic literature in the English language concerning fakes and forgeries. Only two entries were noted for Vatican City; both were articles by the American Philatelic Society's expertiser, Mercer Bristow, that appeared in the now-defunct magazine *Stamp Collector*. Tedesco is apparently unaware of this journal's existence, because he does not include any *Vatican Notes* articles in his bibliography, such as the long



Each 2008 VPS award winner will receive a personalized and framed certificate.

-running series from the 1960s covering forged overprints on Scott #35-40, still the best treatment in English.

Vatican philately made another appearance in *Mekeel's and Stamps* on July 25, 2008. Charles A. Fricke's Postcard Collector column for that issue was a one-page piece on the souvenir airmail postcards offered by the Vatican Pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

Most recently, in *Linn's Stamp News* for September 1, 2008, dealer Henry Gitner recommends buying the first set of the Popes of the Holy Years issue (Scott #1065-72) released in 1998. Gitner notes that "Dealers in Europe are paying as much as €14.50 for the mint set" with se-tenant labels attached ("Stamp Market Tips," p. 70).

### Vatican postal treaty with Order of Malta

The July 28, 2008 issue of *Linn's Stamp News* carries on page 39 an item about the postal treaty concluded on June 24 between the Holy See and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Curiously, the Vatican was the last state on the peninsula to recognize SMOM stamps; Italy and San Marino did so in 2004 and 1991 respectively. Mail franked with SMOM stamps may now be delivered within Vatican City as long as it is properly posted from the Order's headquarters at 68 Via dei Condotti, Rome (pictured below). *Linn's* reports that a joint stamp issue marking the treaty is scheduled for November.

Because they do not belong to the Universal Postal Union, the Order of Malta must negotiate postal treaties with individual countries. The United States does not recognize the Order's stamps, but Canada and 47 other countries do.



A view of the Magistral Palace of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in Rome, from which mail may now be sent to Vatican City. The Magistral Postal Service is administered from this building by Order's Receiver of the Common Treasure, a post currently held by Marquis Gian Luca Chiavari.

### Changes on eBay

The online auction site eBay has reconfigured the subheadings in its stamp listings. Receiving their own distinct category heading for the first time are philatelic hucksters such as Christmas Island, Cook Islands/Aitutaki/Penrhyn, Bhutan, and a host of 'sand dunes'. Even Table Tennis rates a separate subcategory (under Topicals)! Vatican City, however, continues to be lumped with 'Italy and Area'.

### Auction Watch column returns

I'm really grateful to long-time VPSer John Schorn for trying his hand at the Auction Watch column, which proved popular with readers the first time it appeared. I ambushed John at the recent NAPEX show and he has gamely given the column a go. His first installment appears on pages 18 and 20 of this issue. I think he did a great job, but if *you* appreciate the column why not drop him an E-mail or traditional letter and let him know?

## Letters Received

I recently joined the Vatican Philatelic Society and received a copy of *Vatican Notes* (May-June 2008). It is a fine and most useful publication, and I applaud your efforts in this regard. However, as a new member of the VPS, I was surprised (to say the least) with the President's Message. It certainly does not reflect any of the joy of stamp collecting and in fact exudes a bitter tone. And what about the enigmatic "I will also be moving to a more rural area and be breaking in a new woman at the same time?" I have no idea what he means; can it be of any interest to members? I hope the new president can convey a more positive, upbeat tone, with more consideration of members' needs and sensitivities, and less emphasis on personal matters. Regards.

*Jean-Luc Plat  
Montreal, Quebec*

I'm 47 years old and a new member of the VPS (#4020). I have a collection of Roman States covers and would like to ask which catalogue you recommend (the more specialized on covers the better).

*Eric de Wasseige  
Colombia*

*Editor's reply: Sassone includes Roman States postal history in Volume 2 of their specialized catalogue of Italy and States to 1900. It is the best catalogue but can be expensive and difficult to purchase in North and South America. A good compromise for you might be the Vaccari catalogue. It also covers Italy and States to 1900 and includes postal history, but does it all in one volume with separate valuations for solo frankings, combination frankings, etc. Also it can be conveniently ordered online from the publisher (<http://www.vaccari.it>) at a very reasonable price.*