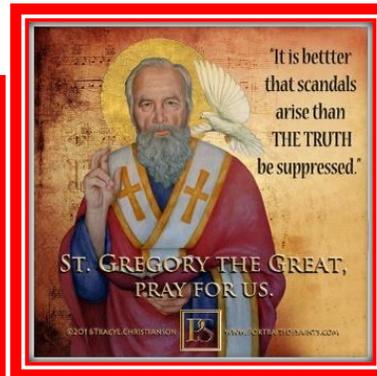
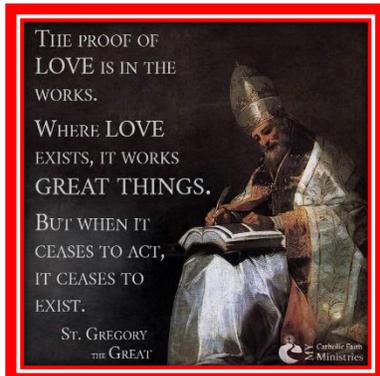


Daily Saints - 3 September Feast of Pope Saint Gregory the Great



He is the patron saint of choir boys, educators, teachers, stonemasons, stonecutters, students, school children, popes, the papacy, musicians, singers, and against gout, against the plague.

Born: c 540, Rome, Eastern Roman Empire, **Died:** 12 March 604 (Aged 64), **Buried:** St. Peter's Basilica (1606), **Consecration:** 3 September 590 **Papacy began:** 3 September 590, **Papacy ended:** 12 March 604,

Gregory was born around 540 into a noble Roman family. His family was very wealthy and owned estates on the island of Sicily which provided income. His father was Gordianus, and he was a senator and a Prefect of Rome. Gordianus also held a position in the Church with the title of Regionarius. Gregory's mother was Silvia, also from a noble family. He had strong religious formation from his devout family, particularly from his mother, Silvia, also a canonized saint. Silvia's sister (Gregory's aunt), Pateria are both recognized as saints. Gregory had a brother.

When Gregory was just two years old in 542, the Plague of Justinian swept through the region. In addition to disease, the barbarian Ostrogoths sacked Rome in 546. The Franks attempted an invasion in 554. Both of these incursions were short-lived. Gregory's family retreated to Sicily during part of that time. Peace followed in Italy after these upheavals.

Gregory was well educated and excelled in all his studies. He also became an expert in law. He excelled so much he became the Prefect of Rome, just as his father had been. Gregory was only 33 years old. After Gregory's father had died, **Gregory had the family villa in Rome converted into a monastery.**

Sometime after becoming the prefect of the former imperial capital, Gregory chose to leave the civil administration to become a monk during the rise of the Benedictine order. As a monk, Gregory was hard and strict. When a monk on his deathbed confessed to stealing three pieces of gold, Gregory ordered he be left to die alone. After the poor monk had died, Gregory ordered his body thrown on a dung heap along with the three coins. Then, in a turn of heart, Gregory offered 30 Masses for the deceased monk.

After three years of strict monastic life, he was called personally by the Pope to assume the office of a deacon in Rome. From Rome, he was dispatched to Constantinople, to seek aid from the emperor for Rome's civic troubles, and to aid in resolving the Eastern church's theological controversies. He returned to Rome in 586, after six years of service as the Papal representative to the Eastern Church and empire.

Rome faced a series of disasters caused by flooding in 589, followed by the death of Pope Pelagius II the next year. Gregory, then serving as abbot in a monastery, reluctantly accepted his election to replace him as the Bishop of Rome. Despite this initial reluctance, however, Pope Gregory began working tirelessly to reform and solidify the Roman liturgy, the disciplines of the Church, the military and economic security of Rome, and the Church's spreading influence in western Europe.

As Pope, Gregory brought his political experience at Rome and Constantinople to bear, in the task of preventing the Catholic Church from becoming subservient to any of the various groups struggling for control of the former imperial capital. As the former abbot of a monastery, he strongly supported the Benedictine movement as a bedrock of the western Church. He sent missionaries to England and is given much of the credit for the nation's conversion.

In undertaking these works, **Pope Gregory saw himself as the “servant of the servants of God.”** He was the first of the Bishops of Rome to popularize the now-traditional Papal title, which referred to Christ's command that those in the highest position of leadership should be “the last of all and the servant of all.”

Pope Gregory made many changes to the Mass; the position of the Our Father in the Mass remains where Pope Gregory placed it. Pope Gregory may have also established "cantus planus," known in English as plainchant. Most today know this style of singing as Gregorian Chant.

He emphasized the aspect of service to the poor for deacons. Deacons were often tasked with giving alms to the poor, and at least one was assigned to each church and ordained for this purpose.

Pope Gregory was well known for his alms to the poor, and he gave quite generously of the riches donated to the Church by the wealthy people of Rome. Everything from money to land was given to the poor in some fashion. He made clear to his subordinates that their duty was to relieve the distress faced by the poor.

He ordered his clergy to go out into the streets to find and care for the poor in person. Any clergy who were unwilling to go into the streets and help the poor were replaced. Assets of the Church were liquidated to provide income for alms. Clergy doing this work were paid four times a year and given a gold coin as a sort of bonus. When a famine struck Rome in the 590s, Pope Gregory ordered the Church to use its assets to feed the poor. At that time, the Church controlled nearly two thousand square miles of

land, overseen by the clergy, and used to generate income. Now, instead of selling the produce of the land, Pope Gregory ordered it shipped to Rome and given away for free. In this way, he saved thousands of people from certain death.

Pope Gregory himself refused to eat until his monks returned from their work of handing out food. **He also made certain to dine with a dozen poor people at each meal.** Gregory is widely considered to be the first medieval pope, and he was a prolific writer. **Pope Gregory suffered from arthritis in his last years. He died on March 12, 604 AD.**

Quotes from St. Pope Gregory

- "The proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist."
- "The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind's eye. In it, we see our inner face. From the Scriptures, we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection."
- "Repentance is weeping for what one has done and not doing what one weeps for."
- "Affliction strengthens the vigor of our soul, whereas happiness weakens it."
- "The Bible is a stream of running water, where alike the elephant may swim, and the lamb walks without losing its feet."
- "If the intention is unclean, the deed that follows from it will also be evil, even if it seems good."
- "Obedience is the only virtue that plants the other virtues in the heart and preserves them after they have been planted."
- "There are in truth three states of the converted: the beginning, the middle, and the perfection. In the beginning, they experience the charms of sweetness; in the middle the contests of temptation; and in the end the fullness of perfection."
- "Act in such a way that your humility may not be a weakness, nor your authority be severity. Justice must be accompanied by humility, that humility may render justice lovable."
- "Have confidence in the compassion of our Creator. Reflect well on what you are now doing, and keep before you the things you have done. Lift up your eyes to the overflowing compassion of heaven, and while He waits for you, draw near in tears to our merciful Judge. Having before your mind that He is a Just Judge, do not take your sins lightly; and having also in mind that He is compassionate, do not despair. The God-Man gives man confidence before God."
- "The only true riches are those that make us rich in virtue. Therefore, if you want to be rich, beloved, love true riches. If you aspire to the heights of real honor, strive to reach the kingdom of Heaven. If you value rank and renown, hasten to be enrolled in the heavenly court of the Angels."
- "Ignorance is a dangerous and spiritual poison, which all men ought warily to shun."

- "There is more joy in heaven over a converted sinner than over a righteous person standing firm. A leader in battle has more love for a soldier who returns after fleeing, and who valiantly pursues the enemy, than for one who never turned back, but who never acted valiantly either. A farmer has a greater love for the land which bears fruitfully, after he has cleared it of thorns, than for land which never had thorns but which never yielded a fruitful harvest."
- "If we knew at what time we were to depart from this world, we would be able to select a season for pleasure and another for repentance. But God, who has promised pardon to every repentant sinner, has not promised us tomorrow. Therefore we must always dread the final day, which we can never foresee. This very day is a day of truce, a day for conversion. And yet we refuse to cry over the evil we have done! Not only do we not weep for the sins we have committed, we even add to them... If we are, in fact, now occupied in good deeds, we should not attribute the strength with which we are doing them to ourselves. We must not count on ourselves, because even if we know what kind of person we are today, we do not know what we will be tomorrow. Nobody must rejoice in the security of their own good deeds. As long as we are still experiencing the uncertainties of this life, we do not know what end may follow....we must not trust in our own virtues."