

GREGORY THE GREAT

Now that we are firmly in Ordinary time and our gospels concern themselves with the teachings of Jesus Christ, I'd like to write about the saint whose feast day was September 3rd, Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church.



The story of Saint Gregory is very interesting. He was the son of Gordianus, a Roman regionarius and Saint Sylvia of Rome, nephew of Saint Emiliana and Saint Tarsilia, great-grandson of Pope Saint Felix III. He was educated by the finest teachers in Rome and entered government service. At the age of 30, he became the prefect of Rome, essentially the mayor, for a year. He then became a Benedictine monk. He sold his possessions, turned his home into a Benedictine monastery, and used the proceeds to build six monasteries in Sicily and another in Rome. He was ordained a deacon and became the pope's legate or representative to the Roman emperor, who was in Constantinople. Upon seeing English children being sold in the Roman Forum, he became a missionary to England.

He was elected 64th Pope by unanimous acclamation on 3 September 590, the first monk to be chosen. He sent Saint Augustine (of Canterbury) and a company of monks to evangelize England, as well as other missionaries to France, Spain and Africa. He collected melodies and plainchant, so associated with him, that they are now known as Gregorian Chants. One of the four great doctors of the Latin Church, he authored several important works on the Mass and Divine Office and morals. It was St. Gregory who inserted the Our Father into the communion rite of the Mass. He occupied the Chair of St. Peter until 594.

In art, he has been represented wearing the papal crown, which was last worn and then suppressed by Pope Paul VI in 1963. He is also represented with a bird, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, whispering in his ear.

The first four doctors in the Latin or western Catholic Church are: St. Ambrose (340-397 A.D.) St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.), St. Gregory the Great (540-604 A.D.) and St. Jerome (347-420 A.D.)

Fr. Greg