

In another story it was told that as St. Gregory was passing over the bridge of St. Peter's, a heavenly vision appeared to him. The Archangel St. Michael was seen over the tomb of the Emperor Hadrian and the pestilence afflicting Rome ended. To this day, the tomb of Hadrian in Rome is called the Castle of St. Angelo in memory of St. Michael's visit and the miraculous deliverance of the city from plague. The custom of saying "God bless you" when someone has sneezed, and the making the of the sign of the cross on the mouths of those who yawn, goes back to the days of Saint Gregory and the Roman plague. He referred to himself as "servant of the servants of God."

In 593, St. Gregory wrote the four books of Dialogues, which, together with the Pastoral Rule, were the two works most universally read and prized throughout the Middle Ages. The dialogues provide an excellent history of the times. The second of its books relates to the life of St. Benedict while the other three books contain accounts of the virtuous lives and the deeds of extraordinary holiness of the courageous and suffering Catholics of those days. He was also a vigilant guardian of the Church's doctrine. He ordained the first four ecumenical councils of the church. He worked to stamp out heresy; ordered that at the beginning of Lent blessed ashes should be placed on the foreheads of the faithful, instead of upon only the head of the Pope, and that priest should repeat to each one, "Remember, man, that dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." He is also the first pope to use the phrase, "to speak ex cathedra." He reorganized the "stations," still mentioned in the Roman Missal, especially in the Lenten Masses. St. Gregory patiently restored the ancient chant of the Church and in setting down rules to be followed. He held that music was subordinate and background to the sacred re-enactment of Calvary. Today we refer to this music as the "Gregorian Chant."

St. Gregory the great died on 12 March 604, at the age of 64. He was canonized immediately after his death, by unanimous acclaim of his people. Later, because of the volume, the extraordinary insight and the profundity of his writings, that depth and extent of his learning, and the heroic holiness of his life, the Church gratefully placed him beside Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine as one of the four great Church doctors of the West .

****(excerpted from: //Catholicism.org)



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Saint Gregory I, The Great

Feast Day: March 12



**O God,
You look upon Your people with compassion,
and rule them with love.
Through the intercession of Pope Saint Gregory,
give wisdom to the leaders of Your Church
that the growth of Your people
in holiness and love of You
may be the everlasting joy of our pastors.
Amen.**

St. Gregory the Great

*Pope St. Gregory I, commonly known as St. Gregory the Great, was one of the most fascinating of early Church leaders. Son of a Roman Senator, St. Gregory was born in Rome around 548 AD and, following his dad's footsteps, embarked upon a political career. He rose through the ranks of civil service and eventually became Prefect (mayor) of the city of Rome. At that point, Gregory discerned a call to deeper life with God so he promptly gave away his wealth to the poor and entered the monastery of St. Andrew (ca. 574) where he ultimately became abbot (586). The Pope, recognizing his talents, named him as one of the seven deacons of Rome and then sent him on a diplomatic mission as papal legate to the imperial city of Constantinople where he remained for six years. Upon the death of the Pope in 590, St. Gregory was elected to succeed him, the first monk ever elected as the Successor of Peter. This man who wanted nothing else but to be a simple monk had to undergo a profound interior struggle before accepting this election as the will of God. Immediately he set to work putting in order the affairs of a Church and society in chaos. *(excerpted from: www.crossroadsinitiative.com)

**St. Gregory not only saved the Church, in times so frightful than men who live in them were sure that the end of the world was near, but he founded the great civilization which has lasted down to our day and of which we are a part, Western civilization. All alone, in the midst of famine and pestilence, floods and earthquakes, endangered by Greeks and barbarians alike, and abandoned by the Emperor, Pope Gregory, frail and ailing in body but strong and undaunted in spirit, succored and saved his people, his city, his country, and the whole of Christendom.

The great Roman Empire which for 300 years had persecuted the Christians and driven them underground to the catacombs was by the year 476 in total collapse. The empire in the West fell to various barbarian invaders. Gregory's boyhood was laden with catastrophes which followed the aftermath of the fall of Rome to the barbarians in 476. While it is true that Gregory was not born until 540, life in Rome went on as usual after the fall in 476 with the full impact of the revolution not felt until the next century.

Gregory – who would not only bring order out of all this, but would as well, lay the foundation for the great Middle Ages—was born to one of the last of the old Roman families illustrious for generations of noble achievement. His family, was a family of saints. Pope Felix III was his ancestor, and both of

Gregory's parents, renounced their immense fortunes, and consecrated themselves to God, and to spend their last years in the service of the Church.

After disposing of his wealth the prefect Gregory became a Benedictine Monk. His place on the Caelian Hill was turned into the monastery of St. Andrew. His large estates in Sicily he gave as sites for six other monasteries, each of which he carefully endowed before he turned over the remainder of his fortune for the care of the poor. He lived at St. Andrew's monastery for three years never thinking that one day he would become pope. In 578, Pope Benedict I made him one of the seven deacons of Rome. Pope Pelagius II sent Gregory as his permanent ambassador to the Byzantine court at Constantinople. He remained there for six years. It was while there that he came to grips with the heresy of Eutychius, who wrote a book concerning the resurrection of our bodies on the last day of the world. Eutychius claimed that we would not have a glorified body but one that would be intangible; barely able to be seen, much less touched. The Emperor finally intervened and decided that Gregory was correct.

In the year 586, Gregory was recalled to Rome. He returned to his monastery, to be acclaimed its abbot. He found Rome again beset with calamities. Floods and tempests battered it and earthquakes rocked it. Worst of all, Gregory found that the spirit of the world had crept into his monastery during his absence. There was a general relaxation of the attachment for the goods of the world. A monk who lay dying, confessed that he had in his bed three gold coins. This violation of poverty grieved Gregory, and he decided to punish the monk in such a way that no one would soon forget. When Brother Justus died, his body was not allowed to be buried in the little cemetery of St. Andrew's, but rather in a dunghill together with the three crowns. As Gregory notes in his Dialogues the monk died contrite and penitent and out of compassion for the soul, offered masses for 30 consecutive days. God was pleased with the charity of his disciple. On the 30th day, Brother Justus appeared to one of the brothers and told him that he was delivered from purgatory. This story has been preserved down to our own time in the well-known "Gregorian Masses".