

Upon leaving the general's house, he fled for sanctuary to the basilica of the martyr St. Sabina; where Belisarius discovered him and was admitted alone to Silverius' sanctuary and he was taken to Antonina. She received Silverius sitting upon her bed, while Belisarius was seated at her feet; she insulted him while a sub-deacon tore the pall off his shoulders. He was then carried into another room, stripped of all his pontifical ornaments, and clothed with the habit of a monk. After this it was proclaimed that the pope was deposed, and became a monk. Belisarius, the next day, caused Vigilius to be chosen pope, and he was ordained on November 22, 537. Silverius was banished to Patara, in Lycia where he was received with honor and respect by the bishop of that city. The bishop also undertook his defense and obtained a private audience with the emperor, warning him of the divine judgment for the expulsion of the bishop of Rome. Justinian appeared startled at the atrocity of the proceedings, and gave orders that Silverius should be sent back to Rome, and in case he was not convicted of the treasonable intelligence with the goths, that he should be restored to his see; but if found guilty, should be removed to some other see. Belisarius and Vigilius were uneasy at this news, they contrived to prevent it, and intercepted the pope on his way to Rome. Antonina resolving to gratify the empress, prevailed with Belisarius to deliver up the pope to Vigilius who put him into the hands of two of his officers and conveyed him to the little inhospitable island of Palmaria, and near two abandoned desert islands, one called Ponza, the other Vento Tiene. In this place Silverius died in a short time of hard usage--Liberatus, from hear-say, tells us of hunger; but Procopius, a living witness, says he was murdered, at the instigation of Antonina, by one Eugenia, a woman devoted to their service. The death of Pope Silverius happened on June 20, 538. Vigilius, after the death of Silverius, became the lawful pope by the ratification or consent of the Roman church, and from that time renounced the errors and commerce of the heretics. He afterwards suffered much for his steadfast adherence to the truth and became the support of the orthodox faith. The providence of God in the protection of His Church never appears more visible than when he suffers tyrants or scandals seemingly almost to overwhelm it. Then does he most miraculously interpose in its defense to show that nothing can make void his promises. Neither scandals nor persecutions can make His word fail, or overcome the Church which he planted. He will never let the devil wrest out of His hands, the inheritance which His Father gave Him, which cost Him his most Precious Blood to establish.

*(excerpted from; www.jesus-passion.com; www.ponza.org)

For more information visit San Silverio Shrine New York at www.sansilverioshrine.org

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Saint Silverius

Feast Day: June 20



Saint Silverius, Pope and Martyr,

pray for us!

Saint Silverius

*Pope Silverius (536-537) was a legitimate son of Pope Hormisdas, who had been married before he entered the ministry. Upon the death of Saint Agapetas, after a vacancy of forty-seven days, Silverius, then a sub deacon, was chosen Pope, and ordained on June 8, 536, while Theodatus, the Goth, was King of Italy. Theodoric had bequeathed that kingdom to his grandson, Athalaric, under the tuition of his mother, Amalasueta, a most wise and learned princess. Athalaric died in 534, after a reign of eight years, when Amalasueta called Theodatus, a nephew of her father, Theodoric, by a sister, to the throne; but the ungrateful king, jealous of his power, caused her to be confined on an island in the lake of Bolsena, and there she was strangled in a bath, before the end of the same year, 534. This action encouraged the Emperor Justinian to attempt the reduction of Italy. Belisarius, his general, marched with his army against Italy, and in 536 took Naples. Upon which the Goths deposed Theodatus and raised Vitiges, an experienced officer, to the throne. Persuaded by Pope Silverius, Rome opened the city to the imperialists (Belisarius), who entered by the Asinarian gate, while the Gothic garrison retired by the Flaminian gate towards Ravenna, where Vitiges had shut himself up.

Theodora, the empress of Constantinople, a violent and crafty woman, seeing Justinian now as master of Rome, resolved to make use of that opportunity to promote the sect of the Acephali, or most rigid Eutychian, who rejected the Council of Chalcedon; and also the Henoticon of Zeno, which Petrus Mongus, the Eutychian Patriarch of Alexandria, had received, endeavoring in some degree to qualify that heresy. Anthimus, Patriarch of Constantinople, was suspected of abetting the Acephali, and by credit of the empress had been translated, against the canons, from the see of Trebisond, to that of Constantinople. When Pope Agapetus came to the imperial city in 536, he refused to communicate with Anthimus, because he could never be brought to own in plain terms two natures in Christ; whereupon he was banished by Justinian; and St. Mennas, an orthodox holy man, was ordained Bishop of Constantinople by Pope Agapetus himself.

This affair gave the empress great uneasiness, and she never ceased studying some method of recalling Anthimus, until the taking of Rome offered her a favorable opportunity of attempting to execute her design. Silverius being then in her power, she endeavored to win him over to her interest, and wrote to him, requiring that he acknowledge Anthimus lawful bishop, or to appear in person to Constantinople, and

re-examine his cause on the spot. The good pope knowing how dangerous it was to oppose the favorite project of an empress with a violent temper, realized that this affair would in the end cost him his life. Without the least hesitation or delay, he returned her a short answer, by which he peremptorily gave her to understand that she must not flatter herself and that he either could or would come into her unjust measures, and betray the cause of the Catholic faith. The empress realizing the firmness of his answer resolved to compass his deposition.

Vigilius, arch-deacon of the Roman church, a man of address, was then in Constantinople, to attend to the affairs of the late Pope Agapetus. The empress made her application to him, and finding him taken by the bait of ambition, promised to make him pope, and to bestow on him seven hundred pieces of gold, provided he would engage himself to condemn the Council of Chalcedon, and receive to communion the three deposed Eutychian patriarchs, Anthimus of Constantinople, Severus of Antioch, and Theodosius of Alexandria. The unhappy Vigilius, having assented to these conditions, the empress sent him to Rome, charged with a letter to Belisarius, commanding him to drive out Silverius, and to contrive the election of Vigilius to the pontificate. Vigilius urged the general, on one side, to execute the project, and Vigilius' wife Antonina on the other; she being the greatest confidant of the empress.

To make this project more easily to bear, the enemies of the good pope impeached him for high treason. Vitiges, the Goth, returned from Ravenna in 537, with an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men, and invested the city of Rome. The siege lasted a year and nine days, during which the Romans performed prodigies of valor before they were obliged to retire. The pope was accused of corresponding during the siege with the enemy; inviting the King of the Goths into the city and promising to open the gates to him. Belisarius saw this to be a calumny, and discovered the persons who had forged the letter, namely Marcus, a lawyer, and Julianus, a soldier of the guards. The general dropped this charge of treason, but entreated the pope to comply with the will of the empress, assuring him he had no other means of avoiding the loss of his see, and the utmost calamities. Silverius always declared that he could never condemn the Council, nor receive the Acephali to his communion.