

## St. Gregory the Great

### Pope and Doctor of the Church



St. Gregory, born at Rome about the year 540, was the son of Gordianus, a wealthy senator, who later renounced the world and became one of the seven deacons of Rome. After he had acquired the usual thorough education, Emperor Justin the Younger appointed him, in 574, Chief Magistrate of Rome, though he was only thirty-four years of age.

His mother Silvia appears also to have been of good family, but very little is known of her life. She is honoured as a saint, her feast being kept on 3 November. Portraits of Gordianus and Silvia were painted by Gregory's order, in the atrium of St. Andrew's monastery, and a pleasing description of these may be found in John the Deacon (*Vita*, IV, lxxxiii). Besides his mother, two of Gregory's aunts have been canonised, Gordianus's two sisters, Tarsilla and Æmilians, so that John the Deacon speaks of his education as being that of a saint among saints.

After the death of his father, he built six monasteries in Sicily and founded a seventh in his own house in Rome, which became the Benedictine Monastery of St. Andrew. Here, he himself assumed the monastic habit in 575, at the age of thirty-five.

After the death of Pelagius, St. Gregory was chosen Pope by the unanimous consent of priests and people. Now began those labors which merited for him the title of Great. His zeal extended over the entire known world, he was in contact with all the Churches of Christendom and, in spite of his bodily sufferings, and innumerable labors, he found time to compose a great number of works. He is known above all for his magnificent contributions to the Liturgy of the Mass and Office. He is one of the four great Doctors of the Latin Church. He died March 12, 604. He is the patron of teachers.