

Reflection Saturday Week 22 St Gregory the Great 2022

Pope St Gregory the Great was born in Rome, 504, and entered public service which was usual for the son of an aristocrat. He became Prefect of the City of Rome, a post he held for some years. He founded a monastery in Rome and others in Sicily, then became a monk himself. He was ordained deacon and sent as an envoy to Constantinople, on a five-year mission. He was elected Pope on 3rd September 590, the first monk elected to this office. He reformed the administration of the Church's estates and donated the surplus funds to the poor and the ransoming of prisoners. He negotiated treaties with the Lombard tribes ravaging northern Italy. By cultivating good relations with these and other barbarians he was able to keep the Church's position secure in areas where Roman rule had broken down. He sent Augustine and his monks as missionaries to England in 596, providing them with continuing advice and support and (in 601) sending reinforcements. He wrote extensively on pastoral care, spirituality, and morals, and designated himself "***servant of the servants of God.***" He died on 12th March 604. Since this date always falls within Lent, his feast is celebrated on the date of his election as Pope.

In our times, Pope Francis certainly responds to Gregory's title of being a servant of the servants of God. Pope Francis is one who cares pastorally, spiritually and morally for the faithful and in particular for his fellow Bishops and priests of the Church, his brothers. He helps us understand this commission of Jesus giving him power over evil, both to forgive and set people free and also to prevent evil penetrating the life of the Church and its people. In remembering Pope Gregory, we pray that he will guide and inspire Pope Francis in his role as leader of the Church.