

ST GREGORY THE GREAT



NOVENA

DAY 1

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

From Evangelii Gaudium 137:

It is worth remembering that “the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as a dialogue between God and His people, a dialogue in which the great deeds of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the covenant are continually restated”.¹

The homily has special importance due to its eucharistic context: it surpasses all forms of catechesis as the supreme moment in the dialogue between God and His people which lead up to sacramental communion. The homily takes up once more the dialogue which the Lord has already established with his people. The preacher must know the heart of his community, in order to realize where its desire for God is alive and ardent, as well as where that dialogue, once loving, has been thwarted and is now barren.

¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (31 May 1998), 41: AAS 90 (1998), 738-739.

Let us pray:

St Gregory, you are called the Great because of your faithfulness to Christ and His Church, to mission, and love of the sacred liturgy. You helped those in need and sought the conversion of England for Christ.

Through your intercession, please obtain for us the graces we need to be stalwart in faith the way you were.

We especially ask for your prayers for the people in need, for our parish community, our priests, our missionaries and the Pope.

In particular, I ask for the grace of (mention your request here...)

Help me to live a holy life, full of faith, joy, love, service for others and doing what is good before you so that I might enjoy eternal happiness in Heaven.

Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be
St. Gregory the Great, pray for us.

Find out more about St. Gregory

God blessed St Gregory with many talents. He was born into a wealthy family of good standing – his father was a Prefect of Rome. He was a brilliant student, an excellent Prefect of Rome and a skilful diplomat as Papal Nuncio to Constantinople. He used all these gifts for the glory of God.

DAY 2

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Find out more about St. Gregory

St Gregory was not the only saint in his family. His mother became St Silvia, and he had two aunts who became St Emiliana and St Tharsilla. He also had a great-great-great-grandfather who was St Felix III who had also been a Pope. St Silvia is the patron saint of all mothers of priests, as well as of those who pray for vocations and those who devote their time to helping priests.

DAY 3

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
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From Evangelii Gaudium 2:

The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience.

Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades.

This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.

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Find out more about St. Gregory

St Gregory was one of four doctors of the early Church. He was not a medical doctor or a PhD doctor but a great teacher of the Church. Tradition has it that St Gregory was dictating one of his great works to a scribe. There was a curtain between them. The scribe wondered why St Gregory was not speaking. The scribe made a small hole in the curtain and saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove with its beak in St Gregory's ear.

When the bird removed its beak St Gregory continued dictating. St Gregory wrote many works in this way under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit – these works are still studied today.



DAY 4

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
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From Evangelii Gaudium 211:

I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God's cry: "Where is your brother?" (Gen 4:9).

Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved?
Where is the brother and sister who you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour?
Let us not look the other way.

There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity.

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Find out more about St. Gregory

St Gregory is also known as the Father of Christian Worship. He brought order to the liturgy making it more reverent, holy and sacred. He is famous for introducing Plain Chant which is commonly called Gregorian Chant today.

DAY 5

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
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From Evangelii Gaudium 199:

Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other “in a certain sense as one with ourselves”.

This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires us effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith.

True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: “The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely”.

The poor person, when loved, “is esteemed as of great value”, and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one’s own personal or political interest.

Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Only this will ensure that “in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?”

Without the preferential option for the poor, “the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications”.

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so that I might enjoy eternal happiness in Heaven.
Amen.*

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Find out more about St. Gregory

St Gregory is also called Common Father of the Poor. When his father died St Gregory converted his house into a Benedictine monastery. Rome was frequently attacked by marauding bands so there was widespread famine and plague.

St Gregory organised deacons from his monastery to distribute food parcels to the poor. Within the monastery there was a large, black-marbled dining-room table. Tradition has it that it was at this table St Gregory and his mother, St Silvia, received twelve poor people each day in memory of Christ's Last Supper.

One day a vacant seat was occupied by an angel. Initially St Gregory didn't dare ask who the thirteenth guest was, but eventually he did. The angel revealed himself to St Gregory who saw it as a sign.

He decided to invite thirteen guests from then on. This episode is recounted on the mural, by Antonio Viviani, that is located beside the table in St Barbara's Oratory.

DAY 6

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
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From Evangelii Gaudium 210:

It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others.

Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis.

How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralysing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others!

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When Pope Pelagius II died of the Bubonic Plague the people of Rome chose St Gregory to be the next Pope. He did not want the post and tried to leave Rome.

He hid in a ditch and God sent a shaft of light to show the people where he was hiding.

Reluctantly he accepted the Papacy calling himself “the Servant of the Servants of God.”

DAY 7

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
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From Evangelii Gaudium 127:

Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers.

This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home.

Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.

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St Gregory had a great devotion to Our Lady especially to Salus Populi Romani. At the height of the plague, he ordered the people to prayerfully process around Rome carrying the picture of Our Lady:



Their prayers were answered, and St Gregory had a vision in which he saw St Michael on top of Hadrian's Tomb wiping his sword and resheathing it. After this incident Hadrian's Tomb was renamed Castel Sant'Angelo.



DAY 8

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
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From Evangelii Gaudium 6:

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty.

Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.

I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress:

“My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is... But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness... It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord” (Lam 3:17, 21-23, 26).

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St Gregory is also called The Apostle to England. After seeing fair-skinned, fair-haired children for sale in a slave market in Rome, St Gregory asked where they came from. When he was told they were **Angles**, he said "They are not Angles, but angels". He reportedly said, "Well named, for they have angelic faces and ought to be co-heirs with the angels in heaven".

Discovering that their province was Deira, he went on to add that they would be rescued de ira, “from the wrath”, and that their king as named Aelia, Alleluia, he said. He never forgot the children and, although he never was able to go to England himself, he sent St Augustine of Canterbury to England to convert the English. The mission bore much fruit for a while but sadly Christianity is on the decline again and England is in need of a new apostle to revitalise the faith.



DAY 9

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From Evangelii Gaudium 120:

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19).

All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelisation to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.

The new evangelisation calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptised. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelisation; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.

Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".

If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: “We have found the Messiah!” (Jn 1:41).

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St Gregory worked hard to save as many souls as possible. He was very popular among the people. When he died, he was canonised almost immediately by popular acclaim.

