



CARMELITE MISSIONS

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are needed **NOW**
more than ever.

Challenging Times in India continued...

to have a pedal to assure their continual usage. You might want to help Carmelite Missions as we try to respond to Sister Retty's sincere request. From my visit in 2008, I know that the Sisters use the sewing annex as a means to continue also their programs to help the girls learn to read and write. What a blessing this will be for the rest of their lives!

Thank you for keeping Mount Carmel School in your prayers and for helping us to say "YES" to Sister Retty's plea for some new sewing machines. As you think of the blessing of children and grandchildren returning to school during September, please remember less fortunate young girls and women seeking to learn a skill and hoping to learn to read and write in India. May God bless you for your kindness to them and to Carmelite Missions.

Love and peace,

Fr. John Malley, O. Carm.

Director of Carmelite Missions

Saint of the Month continued

In the perspective of history, we see Gregory as a bridge between the ancient and the medieval Church and world. We see him as one who established the primacy and universal rule of the Pope as Bishop of Rome. To him it was an article of faith that it was to the See of Peter "to whom was committed the care and primacy of the whole Church."

Spent with work rather than years, Gregory fell ill on March 12, 604, and he gave his soul to God. The process of canonization that is now in vogue was not yet organized. It was not needed. The people of Rome canonized him themselves. They knew Gregory was a great Pope while he was still alive. They knew that he was saint when he died, and he soon became known among them and throughout the world as Gregory the Great! ✠

Remember the Carmelite Missions when you write your will.

CARMELITE



MISSIONS



Father John Malley, O.Carm.
Director of Carmelite Missions

Challenging Times in India

As schools begin again in the United States and Canada during the month of September, I would like to share with you a letter about a challenging situation at a Carmelite school in Kosigi, India. In 1998, our priests and sisters who mostly live in the state of Kerala, one that is predominantly Christian, wanted to begin a “mission” in the state of Andhra Pradesh that is 90% Hindu with the lowest literacy rate in the country. Because there was absolutely no school in the whole area for children aged 5-14, they began Mount Carmel School ten years ago.

When I visited the parish (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) in December 2008, there were 600 children in the school, from kindergarten to the eighth grade. Unfortunately, however, the parents do not see great value in the education and in the literacy of their daughters. When I visited the eighth grade classroom, I found twenty-seven boys, but only two girls – a dropout of almost 95% since the kindergarten. Our Sisters have tried to remedy that situation by building a small annex to the school that contains a sewing center for the girls.

During December 2009, I received a letter from Sister Retty,

the principal of Mount Carmel School. She wrote: “Actually, we are struggling with a lot of work. Did you know about the floods this year? More than twelve villages of our parish got damage. One village completely collapsed. None of the villages got help from any agencies. From October 2nd onwards, we are working for the people. Thus, those who are not knowing Jesus Christ get the chance to know Jesus through our helping hands.”



Sister Retty continued: “Father John, shall I take this opportunity to ask a request? I believe and trust in you. From 2003 onwards, we have one tailoring and embroidering centre. From this centre, 150 neglected and poor girls and women study tailoring. They are very happy to help themselves and their families, but some cannot come because they have no

machines to use. We want to continue this centre; the training is free. Actually, we only have twelve sewing machines and two embroidering machines. Father John, in your deep generous heart, can you help us get more machines?”

I am not sure what Singer Sewing Machines might cost in India today. Because of the lack of constant electricity in the town of Kosigi, however, the machines would probably have

Saint of the Month

St. Gregory the Great 🌿 Feast Day – September 3

To be elected Pope, you must be a great man! First, there is the schooling and training for the priesthood. Then, if you are outstanding, you might become a bishop; or perhaps if you are exceptional, you may be an archbishop. An added step is to be named a Cardinal. Finally, an outstanding man is elected Pope. Having passed all these tests, he should be truly great! Yet, in the history of the Papacy, only a few have been called great. Pope Gregory, who ruled the Church from 590 to 604, was called great. His greatness is evidenced because his influence is felt even to our own day.

To understand his life, we must know some of the conditions during his lifetime. When he was born, the capital of the worldwide empire (of the known world, that is) was Constantinople, now known as Istanbul. The Roman Empire no longer prevailed. The Byzantine Empire was powerful, and all other lands were but provinces of it. Rome did not even merit the title of capital of the West. The Emperor's representative had his court in Ravenna, Italy. The once populous city of Rome had been abandoned by many. What had once been a great capital now had empty palaces and unused buildings.

The Colosseum was still intact. Later it was in ruins because marble and stone were taken from it to build palaces and churches. The Baths of Caracalla and the Arch of Titus were but mute symbols of the glory that once was Rome's. It had become a ghost town. Rome was ravished a few times before Gregory's birth, and only a few wealthy families remained. It appeared that decay and

neglect would condemn Rome to oblivion. This could have come about, but Gregory was not about to let it happen.

Birth and Early Life

Gregory was born of wealthy and pious parents about the year 540. It was said, "He was a good youth and devoted to God." His mother and her two sisters are listed in the Roman calendar as saints – St. Silvia, his mother, Sts. Tarsilla and Emiliana (Emily), his two aunts. His father had charge of a portion of Rome, and his wealth included estates elsewhere, especially in Sicily. Gregory was sent to the best school to learn secular subjects. He was scholarly, socially skilled, and these qualities were attested to by his appointment as prefect of Rome at the age of thirty.



*"Saint Gregory the Great",
by Carlo Saraceni, c. 1610*

His heart ached to see Rome restored. Yet, his soul was also restless, and on the death of his father he used the estates in Sicily to found monasteries there. The family home on the Coelian Hill of Rome was also made into a monastery. Later he resigned as prefect and took up residence as a simple monk. There he sought to grow in holiness. He studied the Sacred

Scriptures and theology, especially learning from the works of St. Augustine. He was happy and at peace. For five years he led a Benedictine monastic style of life. About 580, when he was about forty, Pope Pelagius selected him to care for one of the seven districts of Rome and ordained him a deacon.

His Work for the Pope

Very soon after this, the Pope appointed him to be the Papal Ambassador to Constantinople. From the quiet of his monastery, he was sent to the glittering imperial court. In order to have some semblance of spiritual life, he took some monks with him and tried to salvage some monastic simplicity in the midst of splendor.

Oddly enough, he did not know Greek, the language of the court, nor did he learn it. However, he soon became close to the Emperor and Empress who selected him to be the godfather of their son. He became friendly with the Patriarch and also with St. Leander, the Bishop of Seville, Spain. He sought in vain to get imperial help for Italy. The Lombards had conquered much of that country, ruling sternly and living as the pagans they were. The Emperor's representative in Ravenna was disinterested. The Emperor himself was concerned with wars in Persia. Gregory was unable to accomplish his desired goal, although he did have an influence for good. He was recalled to Rome in 586.

He returned to his monastery, and soon afterwards he was elected abbot (superior), but Pope Pelagius soon looked to him for help. He was often asked to represent the Pope at special

functions, and he was given a post much like the Pope's secretary. He became better known and respected among the people of the city because of his sermons and his work for the poor.



*"Saint Gregory the Great with St. Ignatius",
by Ludovico Ludovisi, c. 1626*

Bishop of Rome

During the year 590, the Tiber river flooded the city, and left in its wake a plague that led to the death of many of the people, including the Pope, Pelagius II. In those days, Rome elected its own bishop, and the unanimous choice of the people was Gregory, who was not even a priest. He pleaded against it and wrote letters to the Emperor to have his election nullified. Yet the plague raged on, and Gregory ordered a solemn procession to win God's blessing and the end of the plague. To Gregory's dismay, the Emperor approved of his election. He was ordained a priest and bishop, and he took up the rule of Rome and the Church. His goal was to be a good Pope, and his success is testified to by the title later given to him – Gregory the Great.

His pontificate started on September 3, 590. Gregory was about fifty years old. He first made sure that his own life was exemplary. He set down the ideals of a bishop in a book he wrote called "*Pastoral Care*," that outlines the qualities and duties of a bishop. He sought not only to live by this standard but demanded it of other bishops. This work became a classic, and it was translated from the original Latin into many languages.

Gregory sought to reform the Church, beginning in his own diocese of Rome. There soon came another

serious problem and challenge: to establish the dignity and primacy of the See of Peter and his own role as the Vicar of Christ and the head of the Church. With Constantinople basking in brilliance, the Emperor there was all-powerful. He was even involved in Church matter, and it was difficult for the Bishop of Rome to establish his universal authority, but Gregory slowly and persistently defended his position as the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ.

Outreach to Italy, Europe and England

Politically there was also trouble throughout the rest of Italy. The Lombards had captured and ruled most of the peninsula, and there was constant danger that Rome would be attacked and conquered. Gregory boldly addressed the problem and dealt with the Lombards. By persuasion and tribute, he was able to keep them peaceful, and Italy remained without strife during the time that he was Pope.



"Saint Gregory", by Francisco de Goya, c. 1797

Wars, plagues, floods, and other disasters brought much poverty and death to many parts of Europe. Gregory took stock of the large Papal holdings, much of it derived from the Emperor Constantine. He enlisted honest men who would care well for the lands and revenues. From the income derived, he was able to care for thousands. One of the complaints at his death was that he had depleted the Papal treasury. However, he did so to provide for the poor.

Another facet of his greatness is the evangelization of England. There were

pockets of Christianity in that country within the former Roman colonies. When the Anglo-Saxons overran England, paganism was the way of life of the people, and they lived as barbarians. Before his election as Pope, Gregory himself wanted to go to England. When he was petitioned for missionaries, he was ready to help.

King Ethelbert, an Anglo-Saxon, married Bertha, a Christian, and it was her influence that prompted the request. A monk from Gregory's monastery, Augustine, and forty companions were sent to England, and they arrived there in 597. As we know, Augustine, or Austin as it is sometimes written, was highly successful. He became the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Apostle of England.

Final Deeds

Gregory knew that the liturgy was the heart of Christian living. To make worship of God more meaningful among the common people, he sought to reform it. We hear of the "Gregorian Sacramentary," a collection of prayers for daily worship, and several changes that he brought to the Mass persist to modern times. To make the liturgy more appealing, he introduced a type of music that we know as "Gregorian Chant." He ordered the Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy) to be sung alternatively, and he encouraged the use of the Alleluia except during the penitential seasons. Likewise, he ordered that the Our Father be said at Mass at its present place before Communion.

Another accomplishment of Gregory was his writings. These storehouses of insight and knowledge about theology and Sacred Scripture influenced many theologians, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, and are still used today. There are two books of his sermons and forty homilies on the Gospel. It might be mentioned that he drew heavily from St. Augustine and helped to popularize him.

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