NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

On this day: St. Sylvia

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Nov. 3, 2011 NCR Today

On this day we remember St. Sylvia, mother of St. Gregory.

"One of the greatest Fathers in the history of the Church, one of four Doctors of the West, Pope St. Gregory was bishop of Rome from 590 to 604. He earned the traditional title of *Magnus*, the Great.

"He was born in Rome about 540 into a rich patrician family of the *gens Anicia*, who were distinguished not only for their noble blood but also for their adherence to the Christian faith and for their service to the Apostolic See. . . . The house in which Gregory grew up stood on the Clivus Scauri, surrounded by majestic buildings that attested to the greatness of ancient Rome and the spiritual strength of Christianity. The example of his parents, Gordian and Sylvia, both venerated as saints, . . . inspired lofty Christian sentiments in him."

--Pope Benedict XVI, in *Great Christian Thinkers: From the Early Church Through the Middle Ages,* [1] Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2011, page 141.

Gregory had a fresco painted of his parents on the wall of their house on the Caelian Hill.

"It is interesting to be able to form an idea of the outward aspect of parents under whose eye and influence such men as St. Gregory have grown up. We are enabled to do this in the present case through a description by John the Deacon of portraits of Gordianus and Silvia placed by their son, when pope, in his monastery of St. Andrew. The father is tall, has a long face, a grave countenance, 'green' eyes, a moderate beard, and thick hair. The mother's face is round and fair, showing traces of great beauty though wrinkled with age; her countenance is cheerful, her eyes large and blue, and her lips comely. The description gives us the idea of an interesting pair, the more so from the contrast between them; and that of the mother especially of a very pleasant saint."

--Reverend James Barmby, in *Gregory the Great,* [2] 1879, page 30.

The Oratory of St. Silvia, in the church of San Gregorio Magno al Celio [3] on the Caelian Hill, is believed to stand over her tomb.

Source URL (retrieved on *08/28/2014 - 08:11*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/day-st-sylvia

Links:
[1] http://books.google.com/books?id=GE_sj0-JatAC&pg=PA141&dq=gregory+the+great+silvia&hl=en&ei=PfOxTsvBBOXL0QGzzMDPAQ&a
[2] http://books.google.com/books?id=173YAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=gregory+the+great&hl=
[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Gregorio_al_Celio