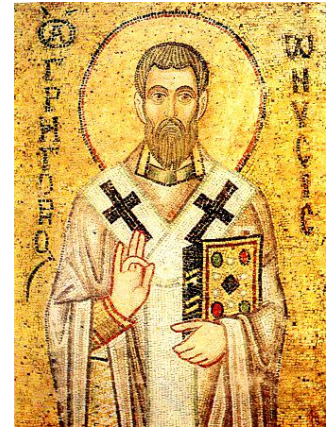


Festivals and Saints' Days (w/c 19th July)

19th July

Saint Gregory of Nyssa - *bishop*

Saint Gregory was one (and perhaps the least) of the *Cappadocian Fathers* (with his brother, Saint Basil and contemporary Saint Gregory Nazianzus). Christianity came quite late to Cappadocia (though the Book of the Acts of the Apostles says that this was the location of the Apostles' Day of Pentecost). Gregory was born into an aristocratic Christian family around AD335. One of many children, he was said to have been quiet and meek. Details of his education are hard to come by, but he was an erudite man, versed in many areas of academic inquiry. He had not initially set off on an ecclesiastical career. At some point he married one Theosebia, who might have been a deaconess; Gregory was a lector. In AD371 there was considerable re-organisation of the Church in the



area and the following year, Gregory was elected the first Bishop of the new diocese of Nyssa. These were turbulent times and for a period Gregory was deposed from his see. He was present at the Council of Constantinople (AD381). It is not known when exactly he died. Gregory was a very able theologian; but in these fraught days, his views often came under attack.

22nd July

Saint Mary Magdalene - *saint*



Little is known about Saint Mary Magdalene's life. It is fair to infer that she was from Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Saint Luke lists her amongst the people who travelled around with Jesus and supporting Him from their personal resources (8: 2f). All four Gospels mention that she witnessed the Crucifixion; and with others the first to witness the Empty Tomb. She is mentioned much more often in the Gospels than most of the Apostles. Later traditions, which through identification with other New Testament figures, portrayed her as a reformed woman of ill-repute are now considered erroneous. She does not appear in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles; but subsequent literature sometimes focused on her quite intensely. A lot of nonsense has been written on the basis of her having given birth to Jesus' children.

25th July

Saint James the Great - *Apostle, martyr*



James is styled, "the Great" to distinguish him from the other Apostle called James. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome and the brother of John the Apostle. He seems to have been part of the core of the Apostolic college, because he was one of three Apostles present at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17: 1–9; Mark 9: 2–8; Luke 9:28–36). On the other hand, he and his brother rather inappropriately requested seats at Jesus' side (Luke 9: 51ff). James appears to have had something of a temper (Mark 3: 17). He was martyred on the orders of Herod in AD44 (Acts 12: 1f). There is an improbable tradition that he had travelled to Spain prior to returning to Jerusalem. Other, though not uncontested, tradition places his relics in Santiago di Compostela. Today, the city is a great centre of pilgrimage.