

St. Benedict

St. Benedict is believed to have been born around 480, as the son to a Roman noble of Norcia and the twin to his sister, Scholastica. His Christ centred, prayerful, life is said to have saved Western Civilisation from destruction.

In the fifth century, the young Benedict was sent to Rome to finish his education with a nurse/housekeeper. Afraid for his soul, Benedict fled Rome, gave up his inheritance and lived in a small village with his nurse. When God called him beyond this quiet life to an even deeper solitude, he went to the mountains of Subiaco. Although becoming a hermit was not his purpose in leaving, there he lived as a hermit under the direction of another hermit, Romanus.

After years of prayer, word of his holiness brought nearby monks to ask for his leadership. He warned them he would be too strict for them, but they insisted -- then tried to poison him when his warning proved true. The story goes, the monks attempted to poison Benedict's drink, but when he prayed a blessing over the cup - it shattered. So Benedict was on his own again -- but not for long. The next set of followers were more sincere and he set up twelve monasteries in Subiaco where monks lived in separate communities of twelve. It was in Monte Cassino he founded the monastery that became the roots of the Church's monastic system.

On one story of Benedict's life, a poor man came to the monastery begging for a little oil. Although Benedict commanded that the oil be given, the cellarer refused -- because there was only a tiny bit of oil left. If the cellarer gave any oil as alms there would be none for the monastery. Angry at this distrust of God's providence, Benedict knelt down to pray. As he prayed a bubbling sound came from inside the oil jar. The monks watched in fascination as oil from God filled the vessel so completely that it overflowed, leaked out beneath the lid and finally pushed the cover off, cascading out on to the floor.

In Benedictine prayer, our hearts are the vessel empty of thoughts and intellectual striving. All that remains is the trust in Jesus's providence to fill us. Emptying ourselves this way brings God's abundant goodness bubbling up in our hearts, first with an inspiration or two, and finally overflowing our heart with contemplative love. Benedict died on 21 March 543, not long after his sister. It is said he died with high fever on the very day God told him he would. He is the patron saint of Europe. (www.catholic.org)

SAINTS FUN FACTS

by mario d. macari

SAINT BENEDICT WAS A MERE TEENAGER WHEN HE LEFT THE SINFUL WORLD IN 497 TO LIVE LIFE FASTING AND PRAYING IN THE INACCESSIBLE DESERT MOUNTAINS. HE WAS THEREFORE QUITE SURPRISED ONE DAY TO SEE A PRIEST BEARING FOOD APPEAR IN THE REMOTE REGION. "IT'S EASTER DAY!," THE PRIEST SAID, "SHARE THIS FEAST WITH ME!"

AFTER PRAYING AND EATING TOGETHER, THE YOUNG SAINT WONDERED WHY THE PRIEST HAD FOUND HIM

AS HE WAS ABOUT TO SIT DOWN TO HIS DINNER THAT DAY, THE PRIEST REPLIED, HE HAD HEARD A GENTLE VOICE SAY: "YOU ARE PREPARING FOR YOURSELF A BANQUET, WHILE MY SERVANT BENEDICT IS DISTRESSED WITH HUNGER." THE PRIEST IMMEDIATELY PACKED UP THE MEAL AND SET OUT LOOKING FOR BENEDICT!

