

Who is Saint Benedict, according to Pope Benedict?

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"Our catechesis today is concerned with Saint Benedict, the Father of Western monasticism. The most important source of information on his life is the Second Book of the Dialogues of Pope Saint Gregory the Great."

Writing in a time of turmoil and moral decadence following the fall of the Roman Empire, Pope Gregory believed that the life and Rule of Benedict could be a light leading the people of Europe out of darkness.

Benedict was born in 480 in the region of Nursia. He came to Rome to study but soon left the city so as to live in silence and to please God alone. He spent some time in a religious community before becoming a hermit in a cave. After struggling victoriously against the fundamental human temptations of pride, sensuality and anger, he decided to found a monastery at Subiaco.

Years later he established a new community on a mountain, Montecassino, to symbolize the public role of a monastery called to be a light shining for the good of the Church and society. Indeed, when he died in 547 Saint Benedict left behind a thriving spiritual family and a Rule, which invites us to search for God in prayer, obedience and humility while attending faithfully to daily duties and to those in need.

In 1964 Pope Paul VI proclaimed Saint Benedict Patron of Europe recognizing the role that his teaching and his disciples had played in shaping Europe's spiritual life and culture. Let us continue to pray that Europe's new unity may be enlightened and nourished by a religious and moral renewal drawn from its Christian roots."