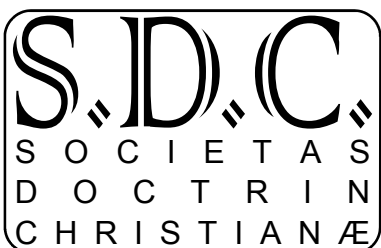# Lives of Saints

St Benedict of Nursia

c.480 - c.547
Feastday: 11th July

> "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. At set times, accordingly, the brethren should be occupied with manual work, and again, at set times, with spiritual reading."
>
> **St Benedict of Nursia**

I was born at Nursia, Italy around the year 480. I was the son of a Roman noble of Nursia, a small town near Spoleto, and a twin with my sister Scholastica. My boyhood was spent in Rome, where I lived with my parents and attended the schools until I had reached his higher studies. Then "giving over my books, and forsaking my father's house and wealth, I departed from Rome.

I fled to the mountains near Subiaco, living as a hermit in a cave for three years. My virtues caused an abbey to request me to lead them. I founded the monastery at Monte Cassino where I wrote the Rule of my order. Some monks tried to poison me once, but I blessed the cup and rendered it harmless. I returned to my cave, but continued to attract followers, and eventually established twelve monasteries. I lived in the thirteenth monastery, and was Abbot to all of them. With the establishment of these monasteries also began the schools for children.

Many people were attracted by my sanctity and character, and came to Subiaco to be under my guidance. I could read consciences, prophesy, and hold back attacks of the devil. I destroyed pagan statues and altars, and drove demons from woods which were sacred to pagans. At one point there were over 40,000 monasteries guided by what came to be called 'the Benedictine Rule'. Because of this, I am usually called 'the father of western monasticism'. A good summary of my Rule would be: "Pray and work."

On the occasion of the dedication of the rebuilt monastery of Monte Cassino in 1964, Pope Paul VI proclaimed me the principal patron of the whole of Europe.