



# The Life and Miracles of St Benedict

*St Gregory the Great*

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## **The Life and Miracles of St Benedict** St Gregory the Great

Excerpt: THERE was a man of venerable life, Benedict by name and grace, who from the time of his very childhood carried the heart of an old man. His demeanour indeed surpassing his age, he gave himself no disport or pleasure, but living here upon earth he despised the world with all the glory thereof, at such time as he might have most freely enjoyed it. He was born in the province of Nursia of honourable parentage and sent to Rome to study the liberal sciences. But when he saw there many through the uneven paths of vice run headlong to their own ruin, he drew back his foot, but new-set in the world, lest, in the search of human knowledge, he might also fall into the same dangerous precipice. Contemning therefore learning and studies and abandoning his father's house and goods, he desired only to please God in a virtuous life. Therefore he departed skilfully ignorant and wisely unlearned. I have not attained unto all this man did, but the few things which I here setdown, were related to me by four of his disciples; namely, Constantine, a very reverend man, who succeeded him in the government of the Monastery; Valentinian, who for many years bore rule in the Monastery of Lateran; Simplicius, who was the third superior of that congregation after him; and Honoratus who yet governeth the Monastery which he first inhabited. CHAPTER I. Benedict having now left the schools resolved to betake himself to the desert, accompanied only by his nurse who most tenderly loved him. Coming therefore to a place called Affile, and remaining for some time in the Church of St. Peter by the charitable invitement of many virtuous people who lived there for devotion, so it chanced that his nurse borrowed of a neighbour a sieve to cleanse wheat, which being left carelessly upon the table was found broken in two pieces. Therefore on her return finding it broke, she began to weep bitterly because it was only lent her. But the religious and pious boy, Benedict, seeing his nurse lament was moved with compassion, and taking with him the two pieces of the broken sieve, with tears he gave himself to prayer, which no sooner ended, but he found the sieve whole, and found not any sign that it had been broken. Then presently he restored the sieve which had been broken, whole to his nurse, to her exceeding comfort. This matter was divulged unto all that lived thereabout, and so much admired by all, that the inhabitants of that place caused the sieve to be hanged up in the Church porch, that not only those present, but all posterity might know with how great gifts of grace Benedict had been endowed from the beginning of his conversion. The sieve remained to be seen for many years after, and hung over the Church door even until the times of the Longobards. But Benedict more desirous to suffer afflictions than covetous of praise; and rather willing to undergo labours for the honour of God, than to be extolled with the favours of this world, fled secretly from his nurse to a remote place in the desert called Subiaco, distant about forty miles from Rome, in which a fountain springing with cool and crystal waters, extendeth itself at first into a broad lake, and running farther with increase of waters becometh at the last a river.

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