



July 11

Commemoration:

Benedict of Nursia, Abbot of Monte Cassino, C. 540

Benedict is generally accounted the father of western monasticism. He was born about 480, at Nursia in central Italy, and was educated at Rome. The style of life he found there disgusted him. Rome at this time was overrun by various barbarian tribes; the period was one of considerable political instability, a breakdown of western society, and the beginnings of barbarian kingdoms. Benedict's disapproval of the manners and morals of Rome led him to a vocation of monastic seclusion. He withdrew to a hillside cave above

Lake Subiaco, about forty miles west of Rome, where there was already at least one other monk. Gradually, a community grew up around Benedict. Sometime between 525 and 530, he moved south with some of his disciples to Monte Cassino, midway between Rome and Naples, where he established another community, and, about 540, composed his monastic Rule. He does not appear to have been ordained or to have contemplated the founding of an "order." He died sometime between 540 and 550 and was buried in the same grave as his sister, Scholastica.