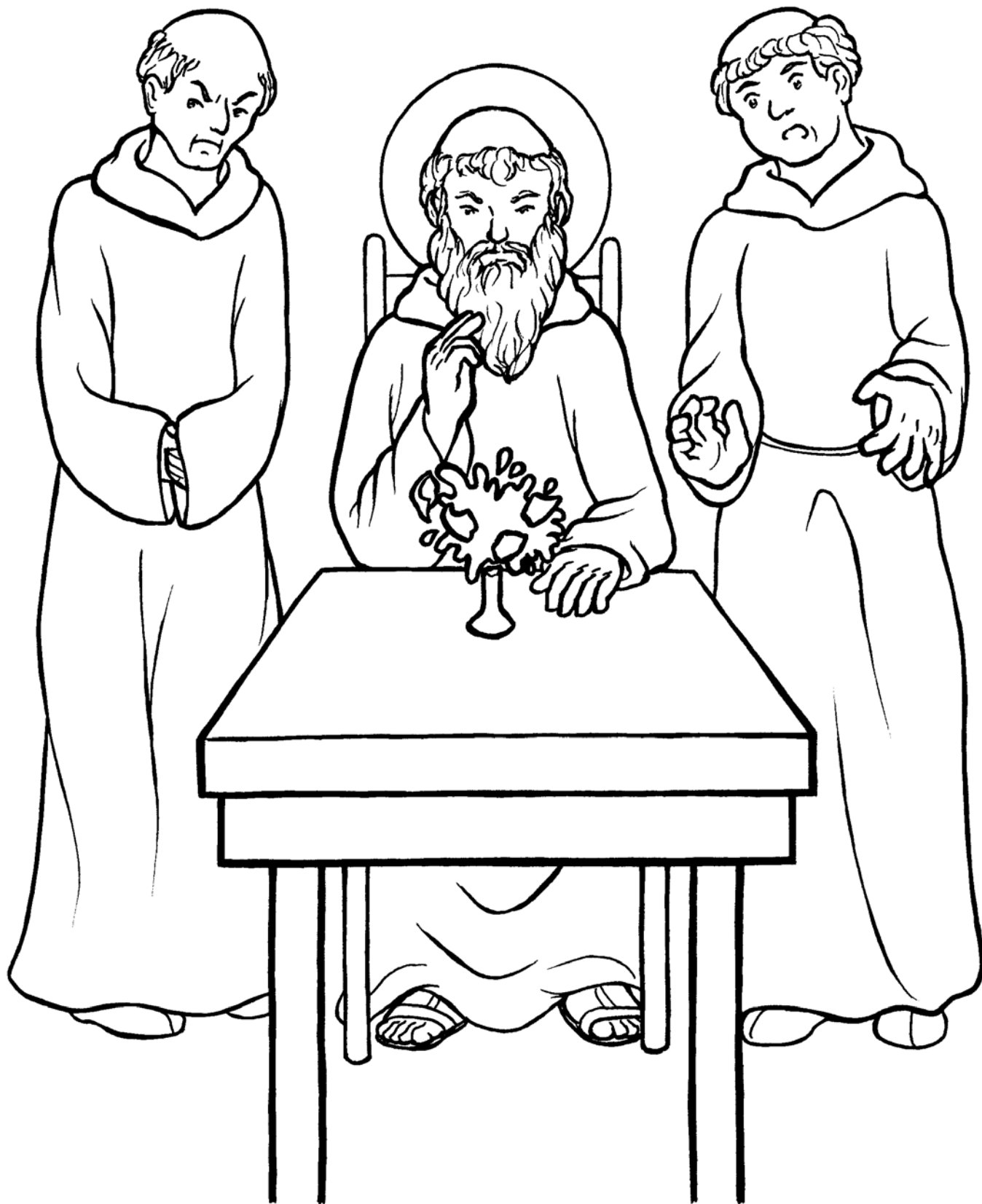


St. Benedict of Nursia

July 11



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480–547 • Italy

Benedict was born into a noble Roman family. He had a sister named Scholastica (who would also become a saint). When he was a young man, Benedict studied in Rome. Benedict enjoyed his lessons, but he was saddened by the sinful lives of the other young men. He wished to separate himself from such worldliness and find the peace and quiet he needed to know God.

Benedict traveled into the mountains of Italy to a place called Subiaco. There, he found a cave high in the rocks overlooking a lake. He met a monk there who showed him how to become a hermit and who would visit him once a week to bring him food.

For three years, Benedict lived alone in his cave. He matured, growing strong in his relationship with God. He performed many miracles, and his fame spread throughout the area. One time, when he was being tempted to sin, he rolled in a thorn bush until the temptation left him. He said that by wounding his body, he was healing his soul.

When the abbot of a local monastery died, the monks asked Benedict to become their next leader. Benedict warned the monks that they would not like him as their leader. He knew that the monks were undisciplined—their community did not observe any rules.

The monks wanted him anyway.

But Benedict was right: the monks found him and his rules too strict. In order to get rid of their new abbot, the monks tried to poison him! When Benedict prayed over the poisoned wine they had given him, the cup shattered into many pieces!

Benedict left the monastery and instead founded twelve other monasteries in the area—including a famous and magnificent monastery called the Abbey of Monte Cassino, built high on a hill. Scholastica also started a convent nearby, and brother and sister would meet to visit and pray together once a year.

Late in his life, Benedict wrote the Rule of St. Benedict, which is a set of rules that a monastery follows in order to be prayerful and to live together in the love of Christ. They followed the motto *ora et labora*—"pray and work." Benedict died a holy death and is known as the "Father of Western Monasticism."

St. Benedict, help me to pray and work for God!