

# Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday

6:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

6:00 A.M. Daily

Holy Days:

6:00 A.M.; 8:00 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 A.M.

Only on first Sunday

of each month

St Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 A.M.

Every Sunday except

first Sunday of each month

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Weekly Bulletin #845

August 29, 2004 – Green

Mass of Sunday; Gl; Cr; Pref. Trinity; Comm. St. Sabina and Beheading of St. John the Baptist

## **LET NOT THE WINDS BLOW OUT THE LIGHT**

*(Part VI)*

The cave in which young Benedict lived afforded him no comfort. The bare ground was his bed and a stone his pillow, with the necessities of life hard to find. No doubt he had to take precautions against the wild creatures and the crawly things that frequent such wilderness places. In spite of the inconveniences and the dangers of the place, it was exactly what he wanted because it provided him with the atmosphere for contemplation he so ardently desired. For an extended period of time, we think about three years, Benedict lived a very rugged and austere existence, all alone as a hermit. The experience he gained was very valuable, not only to him, but to all those fortunate enough to become members of the Family of which he became the Father.

In the complete solitude of that cave the boy became a man, a man of serious mature judgment. He grew into full manhood: physically, mentally, and spiritually. His experience appears in his assessment of the eremitical life, when later he wrote the Holy Rule. Though secluded life had its good points, it also had some serious built-in difficulties that were not conducive to the full life of holiness he came to know to be necessary. Even though Benedict never lost his admiration for the life of a hermit, he came to understand that he had to have the help of others if he was ever to reach the perfection he sought.

Hidden as the cave was, it was not utterly concealed, and some shepherds wandering nearby caught sight of Benedict at the cave's entrance. They went up to him and began talking with him, finding him to be a man of great charm. They found his words to be good words, holy words – words they had hardly ever heard before. They went back to their homes but from time to time returned, each time bringing friends with them. Soon his reputation as a very holy man began to spread about amongst the mountain wilderness people, and in time more and more of them came to him for guidance and direction. At this point we are given slight indications that he was coming to the realization, probably for the first time in his life, that God was calling him to a definite kind of life: a life he had never before dreamed of. At the same time, since he was still a young man full of health and vigor, it seems safe to assume that he had to come to grips with the dangers of the life of a solitary, of one living all alone. The coming of the people finally gave rise to the solution of many of the young man's difficulties.

The story goes on and on, full of incidents, each one an interesting episode all on its own. The scope of our narrative does not include a biographical sketch. We only point to the matters that give formation to our instruction, and we focus our attention on the Holy Rule, and the effect that the Rule had on the generations that followed the days of the young lad from Nursia.

Before long, the people coming to Benedict for instruction became reluctant to leave him. They wanted to remain and to be a part of the good they saw in him. They saw in him something they found in nobody else. They saw perfect love and they were drawn to it. They saw in him one who had separated himself and withdrawn from the love of the world and found a Love that permitted him inward silence and peace. They learned that poverty, prayer, penance, and hardship were not punishments but gifts, as it were, from a Loving Hand. They looked and saw that it was beautiful, and they wanted the same for themselves. As time went on, he gave in to the urgings of the people who did not want to leave, and we begin to see the formation of small communities of men and small communities of women taking shape. Primitive, of course, but important foundation stones for that which was later to come about. Separated from the world they could not endure, they were taught to live a life of PRAYER AND WORK. The person of a loving father (The *Pater Familias*) gave structure to the demands of the various personalities that began to assemble. Little groups were beginning to be formed under the direction of their Father Benedict. Little groups of silent men, who were observed about the country: working, digging, clearing, and building; while other tiny groups of men were observed silently and patiently and carefully copying and recopying valuable manuscripts which they saved, and which, because of them, have been handed down to us for our use. There was on one of those silent men who cried out or who drew attention to what was going on.