July 11

THE ICONS OF BOSE, Saint Benedict

Benedict (ca. 480-547) monk

Today is the feast of Benedict, the father of Western monasticism.
"There was a man of venerable life, Benedictus (blessed) by grace and by name." So begins the second book of *Dialogues*, in which Gregory the Great tells the life story of the most famous Latin monk, who was born in Nursia, Italy around the year 480.
Benedict was sent to study in Rome, but he left the city, "wisely ignorant and sensibly uncultured, desiring to please God alone." He explored the different forms of monastic life that existed at the time, experienced semi-anchorite life in Affile and eremitic life in a cave near Subiaco, and noted the decadence and lack of discipline that characterized cenobitic life in his era.
After a failed attempt to reform an already existing monastery, Benedict returned to solitude. He was soon joined by many people who wished to have him as their spiritual father. Benedict organized a number of small communities for his disciples, assigned an abbot to each community, and taught the monks to become familiar with Scripture and to lead lives of fellowship and prayer.
In 529 Benedict moved to Montecassino with several monks to found a new type of monastery. For this cenobitic community guided by a single abbot, he wrote his Rule, which bears witness to his expert discernment and sense of moderation, and which eventually became the essential guideline for all of Western monasticism. Benedict organized the community's daily schedule so as to allow time for both prayer and work, which he considered equally necessary to monastic life.
According to an ancient tradition, the father of Latin monks died on March 21, 547.

PRAYER

Lord God,
you called Benedict to follow your Son Jesus
by abandoning all of his possessions
and living in celibacy and community:
teach us to serve you in work and prayer
and to prefer nothing to the love of Christ,
and we will run with open and free hearts
along the path of your commandments.
Through Christ our Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Prov 2:1-9; Heb 13:1-17; Lk 18:18-30