

This is the book of St. Benedict,  
written by Saint Gregory the Great, (Dialogues)

*It's translated from the Italian version of the book, and all words, although sometimes sound unusual, are translated closest as possible to the Italian version.*

Benedict (Benedetto) in Italian is the same word of blessed in English, in other words is the english word: Blessed.

John 15,8

“By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

# the beginning of the book

Gregory: following our conversations, we will speak today of a truly remarkable man, worthy of all veneration.

This man was called Benedict and was blessed by name and grace. From the early years of his childhood, he was already mature and almost anticipating the age with the gravity of customs, he never wanted to lower his soul towards pleasures.

If he had wanted to, he could have largely enjoyed the amusements of the world, but he despised them like dried and faded flowers.

He was born into a noble family in the Norcia region. They thought about having him study and sent him to Rome where it was easier to attend to literary studies. But a great disappointment awaited him: he found nothing but young stragglers, ruined in the streets of vice. He was also on time. He had just placed one foot on the threshold of the world: he drew it back, immediately back. He understood that part of that mundane science would also be enough, to plunge whole into the abyss.

So, he abandoned the studies with contempt, abandoned his father's house and possessions and left to search for a cloth that designated him consecrated to the Lord.

Single anxiety burned in his heart: that of only to please Him. So he went away: he had consciously chosen to be uneducated, but he had learned the science of God wisely.

Certainly, I cannot know all the facts of his life. What little I'm about to tell, I have known from the report of four of his disciples: the most reverend Constantine, his successor in the government of the monastery; Valentinian, who was for many years superior of the monastery at the Laterano; Simplicius, who third ruled his community; and finally Onorato, who still directs the monastery where he lived in the first period of religious life.

## 1. The first miracle

Abandoned, therefore, the literary studies, Benedict decided to retire in a lonely place.

But the nurse, that was tenderly fond of him, didn't want to detach herself from him and, alone, she obtained to follow him. And they left.

Reached the place called Enfide, almost forced by the charity of many generous people, they had to interrupt the journey; so they took up residence in the church of S. Peter.

A few days later, the nurse needed to clean some grain and asked the neighbours, who wanted to lend her a crock sieve. However, having left it carelessly on the table, by chance fell and broke into two pieces.

And now? The tool was not hers, but received on loan: she desperately began to cry.

The young man, religious and pious as he was, at the sight of those tears, had a lot of compassion

for lots of pain: took the two pieces of the broken screen, he went to pray and cried. When he got up from the prayer, he found the sieve at his side completely healed, without any slightest sign crack: "There is no need for tears anymore - he said, gently comforting the nurse - The sieve broken here it is, it's healthy!".

The thing, however, was known throughout the country and aroused so much admiration that the inhabitants wanted to suspend the sieve at the entrance of the church: he had to make known to those present and posterity, with how much grace Benedict, still young, had begun the path of perfection.

The sieve remained there for many years, to view of everyone, and until the recent time of the Longobards, it remained hanging over the church door.

Benedict, however, didn't like the praises of the world at all: he rather wanted to undergo hardships and labours for the love of God, than to be great in the honours of this life...

Precisely for this, he took the decision to also abandon his nurse and secretly fled.

He headed for a location lonely and deserted called Subiaco, about 40 miles away from Rome, a place full of fresh and abundant waters, which first collect in a large lake and then turn into a river.

He was therefore hurrying with brisk steps towards this locality when he met a monk named Romano, who asked him where he was going. Knowing his resolution, he gladly offered his help. He then dressed him in the holy habit, the sign of the consecration to God, he provided him with the little necessary according to his possibilities and he renewed his promise to not tell the secret to anyone.

In that place of solitude, the man of God hides in a narrow and rough cave.

He stayed hiding in there, for three years and no one ever knew anything, except for the Roman monk.

He lived in a small monastery not far away, under the guidance of his father Adeodato; with pious tricks, looking for the right moment, he took part of his portion of food and on the set days he led to Benedict. From the Romano's monastery, however, there was not possible to walk to the cave, above this stood out from a very high cliff. Romano therefore from the top of this cliff, skillfully lowered the bread with a very long rope, to this, he had hooked a bell: the man of God heard it, went out and took it.

But the Good never pleases the evil spirit: he felt the anger of the charity of one and the launch of the other.

One day, observing that the bread was being lowered, he threw a stone and broke the bell.

Romano, however, continued to lend this generous service as best as he could.

But God, who disposes of everything, wanted Romano to suspend his laborious charity and more still wanted Benedict's life to become a shining model for men: this shining lamp, placed over the candlestick, he must now radiate his light to all that are in the house of God. For this, the Lord himself deigned to find the way.

A certain priest, who lived quite a lot distant, had prepared the table on Easter day.

Suddenly there is a vision: It's the Lord who speaking: "You have prepared delicious food for yourself, and that's fine: but look over there; do you see those places? There is a servant of mine

who suffers from hunger”. The good priest jumped up and on the same solemn day of Easter, collected the food that he had prepared for himself, flew in the indicated direction. He sought the man of God among the cliffs of the mountains, between the inlets of the valleys and between the caverns of the caves: he finally found him, hidden in the cavern. They both flew first of all to the Lord, raising blessings and prayers to Him. They sat down then, together, exchanging sweet thoughts about the things of heaven. “Now - then said the priest - let's have some food too because today is Easter”. “Oh yes, -Benedict answered - today is really Easter for me because I had the grace to see you”. So far from the men, the servant of God did not even know that that day was the solemnity of Easter. “But today is truly the day of the Lord's Resurrection - the priest resumed - and therefore it is not good for you to fast. I was sent here for this very reason, to feed us together, from good brothers, of these gifts that the Almighty of God has placed in front of us”. And so, with the praise of God on their lips, they dined. Then finished lunch and exchanged some another good word, the priest returned to his church. A short time later also some shepherds discovered Benedict hidden inside the cave.

Having him glimpsed in the middle of the bush, covered as he was with skins, they believed at first that he was a wild beast. Following these facts, his fame spread to all neighbouring countries. And the visits, more and more, became frequent: they brought him food to support his body and they left with a heart full of holy words, food of life for their souls.

## **2. Temptation and victory**

One day while he was alone, here comes the tempter. He was in the form of a small bird and black, a blackbird; he fluttered around his body and insistent and intrusive flapped his wings on his face, so much so that if he had wanted it he could have grabbed it with his hands. He made a sign of the cross and the bird flew away.

But as soon as the blackbird disappeared, a strong impure temptation invaded him, as the holy man had never tried.

He had once seen a woman and now the evil spirit troubled him with a sad reminder of his fantasy. And such hot flame the devil stirred up in the soul of the servant of God with that showy beauty, that he could no longer contain the fire of the impure love and already almost defeated, he was about to decide to leave the cave.

It was an instant: illuminated by the grace of heaven, suddenly returned to himself. Seen there near luxuriant and dense bushes of brambles and nettles, he took off his clothes and threw himself naked among the thorns of the brambles and the burning leaves of the nettles. He rolled for a long time there, in the middle, and when he came out he was torn all over the body; but with tears of the skin, he had driven the wound of the soul from the heart, to the pleasure he had replaced the pain; that external burning deliberately imposed as a punishment he had extinguished the flame that burned inside, and so, by changing the fire, he had overcome the snare of the sin. From that day on, as himself later confided to his disciples, he was so tamed the incentive of

sensuality, to not feel it at all, never again.

After that, many abandoning the vanity of the world, they flocked joyfully under his discipline and rightly, free by now, from the snare of temptation, he could make himself, for others, a teacher of saint virtues. Moreover, even Moses had received, from God, this command: that the Levites from twenty-five years on, performing services in the temple and after fifty, become custodians of the sacred vessels of the altar.

Peter: I don't quite understand the meaning of the passage you mentioned: I would like you to explain it to me a little better.

Gregory: yet it seems clear enough to me, Peter; in youth, the temptations of the flesh are more impetuous, but after, at the age of fifty the heat of the blood begins to cool. The sacred vessels then are the minds of the faithful. The elects, therefore, as long as they are still in the time of temptation, it's better to stay subordinate, that provide services and toil in obedience and work; when, later, at a more mature age, the heat of temptation disappears, then they become custodians of the sacred vessels, they become, that is, guides and teachers of souls.

Peter: here, now your explanation satisfies me. I understand perfectly well, the meaning of your quote. But now, since you told me about the beginnings of the life of this righteous, are you sorry about telling me the rest?

### **3. The sign of the cross**

Gregory: the temptation was therefore overcome. Free from that, the man of God, always with more abundance bore vigorous fruits of virtue, just as it happens in a land cleansed of thorns and well cultivated. He led a truly holy life, and for this reason, his fame was spreading everywhere.

Not far from the cave, lived a small community of religious, whose superior had died recently. All together these men presented themselves to the venerable Benedict and insistently begged him to take over their government.

The holy man refused for a long time, with firmness, above all because he was convinced that their customs could never be reconciled with his beliefs. But in the end, when he could no longer resist their insistence, he agreed. So, He followed them to their monastery.

He immediately began to carefully watch over regular life and no one could afford, as before, to bend right or left from the right path of monastic observance. This made them tired and annoyed, and, foolish as they were, accused each other of having chosen him for their abbot; their crookedness clashed too much against the rule of his righteousness. They realized that under his direction illicit things were absolutely not allowed and on the other hand, the inveterate habits did not really feel like abandoning them: it is so difficult wanting to commit souls of inveterate mentality to new systems!

It's unfortunately notorious that those who behave badly always find annoyance in the life of the good; and so those wicked ones agreed to look for some means to even take his life. There were various opinions and finally decided to mix poison in the wine, and at the table, according to their custom, they presented to the abbot for the blessing of the glass container that contained the deadly drink.

Benedict raised his hand and made the sign of the cross. The container was supported in the hand at a certain distance: the holy sign shattered that vase of death as if a stone had been thrown into it, instead of a blessing.

The man of God immediately understood that jar could only contain a drink of death, why not it had been able to resist the sign that gives the life.

He got up instantly, without altering in the slightest the mildness of his face and the tranquillity of his mind, he brought the brothers together and simply said so: "I ask the Lord wants to forgive you, dear brothers: but why did occur to you to plan this plot against me? I had said to you that our customs could not be agreed: see if it is true? So now that's enough; look for a superior who is okay with your mentality, because I, after this fact, don't feel like staying with you anymore".

And he went back to the lonely cave that he loved so much, and he lived there, alone with himself, under the eyes of the One who sees everything from above.

Peter: I don't quite understand the expression you said: "he lived alone only with himself".

Gregory: I explain to you better. If the holy man had wanted to keep a long time under his rule those monks, who were unanimous against him and they had habits so different from his habits, perhaps he would have been compelled to suspend his austerity and lose his constant tranquillity, diverting the mind's eye from radiant contemplation.

Perhaps, exhausted from everyday life reprimands and punishments that was necessary to give, he would have waited with less enthusiasm about perfecting himself, and maybe he would end up losing sight of his soul, without succeeding to gain that of the others.

Of course, whenever we are out of ourselves due to anxious worries, we are with us and we are not with us, because not seeing the good in ourselves anymore, we go astray in other vanities.

It can be said, for example, that he was in himself that man who emigrated to a distant region, wasted away the inheritance received, placed himself at the service of a citizen, he was relegated to pasture pigs and while these they ate acorns, unfortunately, he suffered the hunger?

Afterwards, however, when the memory of lost goods invaded him, about him so is written: "When he came to his senses, he said: how many mercenaries in my father's house they abound in bread!". Does it mean, that he had first come out from himself, otherwise from where, he would have returned to himself?

I liked, therefore, talking about this man, using the expression: "he lived with him himself" because he's always vigilant in guarding himself, always under the eyes of the Creator, examining and considering himself alone, the eye of his soul never wandered outside himself.



Peter: and then, how does it explain what is written about Peter the Apostle, who, released from prison, “He came to himself and said: now I understand that the Lord has sent his angel and has saved me from his hands of Herod and of all the Jewish people who were waiting?”.

Gregory: dear Peter, in two ways we can get out of ourselves: either by falling below us by the sin of thought or by rising above ourselves by the grace of contemplation. He, for example, envied swine, fell below himself, because of his distracted mind and uncleanness.

Peter instead of the angel was released from chains and was kidnapped in ecstasy, he too, for sure, came out of himself, but he was lifted above himself.

Both then returned to themselves, the one when from his guilty conduct he regained control of his heart, the other when from the sublimity of contemplation he regained the common consciousness as he had before.

It's therefore correct to say that the venerable Benedict lived with himself in that solitude because he kept himself in custody within the limits of his own conscience.

When the momentum of the contemplation carried him up high, then he certainly left himself, but below himself.

Peter: what you say is really interesting. Now, however, I'd like to ask you another question. I wish you to tell me if he did well leaving the brothers after had agreed to govern them.

Gregory: listen Peter I believe that if in a group of bad people there are some who we can bring help, then it's good that they endure each other with serene patience.

But when you don't see, even the shadow, of a good from which to hope for a little fruit, then it's really wasted time and work, everything that it's done for the bad guys, especially if there are close other activities that reach more benefit to the glory of God.

On who, the saint, have stayed to watch when he saw that everyone, without exception, was agree to persecute him? And then we must also keep this in mind: that often the saints when realize, that where they are, they work in vain, they mature in the soul the deliberation to go elsewhere, in a place more fruitful for the labours of the apostolate.

Even Paul, that noblest preacher who longed to die to live with Christ, for whom life was Christ and the death one gain, which not only craved the suffering and struggles for himself but also excited others, well, he too, persecuted in Damascus, to escape from the walls looked for a rope and a shopped bag and secretly wanted to be let out.

Would we have the courage to argue that Paul was afraid of death, while we hear him say that he desires it for the love of Christ? Certainly not.

It was instead so, that, foreseeing in that place very little fruit with great efforts, he wanted to preserve the life for another place with more fruitful labours.

That strong champion of God disdained to remain closed inside the walls and went in search of the outdoor battlefield.

You will soon realize if you're pleased to listen to me again, that also the venerable Benedict left for their own those few unruly alive, but raised elsewhere many hearts from the death of the soul.

Peter: I see well that it's exactly as you say: you made some very logical arguments and you have them also validated with appropriate biblical testimony. Now then let's resume, please, the story of the life of such a great Father.

Gregory: in his loneliness, Benedict progressed without interruption on the path of virtue he performed miracles. Around him, he had gathered many in the service of Almighty God, in so great number, which, with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ, was able to build twelve monasteries, to each of the which appointed an abbot and assigned a group of twelve monks. He kept with him a few monks, to whom he thought appropriate to personally give a more complete formation.

Also, some nobles and religious roman people began to rush to him to entrust their own children, to educate them in the service of Almighty God. Among these Eutichio entrusted him with his Mauro e the patrician Tertullus his Placido: two truly hopeful children.

Mauro, being already a teenager and gifted with holy habits, immediately became the master's assistant.

Placido, on the other hand, was still a child, with all the characteristics of that age.

## **4. Correction of the drawn monk**

In one of those monasteries that he had built nearby, there was a monk who was never capable to be at prayer: every time the brothers gathered to pray, he took the way out and with an amused mind he was engaged in material matters of no importance.

His abbot had already recalled him several times: in the end, he led him to the man of God, who, also, reproached him very harshly for such lightness.

He returned to the monastery, but the admonition did hold on to him, barely for a couple of days; on the third day, returned to old habits, he started wandering again during the time of prayer. The abbot reported the matter again, to the servant of God.

The latter replied: "Now I'm coming, I'll take care myself of putting judgment to him".

Benedict came to that monastery.

At the appointed time, just as the monks finished the recitation of psalms, applied to meditation, he observed that a kind of child, small and dark, he drew out that monk who was unable to stay in prayer, pulling him by the flap of the dress.

He then asked in a low voice to the abbot of the monastery, who was named Pompeian, and to the servant of God Mauro: "Did you not realize who he's that brings this monk out?". They replied, "No, Father." He added: "Let us pray, so you too, may see, who he's going after." After two days of prayer the monk Mauro saw him, Pompeian instead saw nothing.

The next day, after leaving the oratory at the end of the prayer, the servant of God met the monk who was outside; then he whipped him harshly with a rod: it was the only remedy for the lightness

of that mind! From that day on, he was never again influenced by the suggestion of the little dark man, but he persevered standing still and gathered in prayer.

And the ancient enemy no longer dared to influence his thinking, as if he had personally suffered those lashes.

## **5. The water from the stone**

Among the monasteries which he built, there were three located high up among mountain cliffs and, for the poor brothers, was very tiresome, every day, to have to go down to the lake to draw water; especially since the side of the mountain drop precipitously, there was to expect sooner or later, some severe danger for those who descended.

So the monks of the three monasteries agreed, and they presented themselves to the servant of God. “We - they said - have to go down every day to the lake for taking the water, and this job is becoming a bit too difficult: we would be of the opinion that our three monasteries should be transferred elsewhere ”. He gently comforted them and with a smile, dismissed them.

The same night, took that little Placido with him, that I have just talked about above, got on those swift mountains, and stopped a long time to pray.

After the prayer, he placed three stones in that spot, as a sign and without anyone noticing anything, he returned to his monastery.

In one of the following days, the monks returned to him to hear what he had decided on the necessity of the water. He replied, “Go up here, on these mountains, and where you will find three stones set one on the other, dig there a little. Almighty God does not lack the possibility of making water flow on the top of this mountain too, deigning to free you from the fatigue of such a dangerous journey. Go”. They left, and found the cliff of the mountain, that Benedict had described: it was already all overflowing water. They dug a hole in it, which immediately gushed up with water and this gushed out so abundantly that until today it flows copiously along the slopes, down to the valley.

## **6. The iron returns to the handle**

A goth had come to ask for the monastic habit. He was a poor man of very scarce intelligence, but the servant of God, Benedict, had received him with particular kindness.

One day the saint gave to him an iron tool, that had come from the resemblance to a sickle called “Falcastro” because he had to free a piece of land from the brambles, which he then intended to plant a vegetable garden.

The land that the goth immediately set about clearing, lay right above the high bank over the lake. He vigorously worked, cutting with all his strength, very dense bushes of brambles, when all of a sudden, the iron escaped from the handle and fell into the lake, right at a point where the water was

so deep, that there was no hope of being able to fish it out.

All trembling from the loss of the tool, the goth ran to the monk Mauro, revealing the damage he had done, asking to be punished for this fault. Mauro hurried to make known the incident to the servant of God and Benedict went immediately to the place, he took from the hands of the goth, the handle and dipped it in the waters.

Instantly the iron from the depths of the lake came back to the surface and by itself went to graft into the handle. He then put again the tool into the goth's hands, telling him: "Here it is, go ahead with your work and stay happy!"

## **7. Mauro walks on the water**

One day, while the venerable Benedict was sitting in his room, little Placido, already once mentioned, went out to draw water from the lake. Carelessly dipping the bucket that held by the hand, dragged by the current, he too fell into the water and the wave overwhelmed him, carrying away from the ground, almost as much as an arrow shot.

Although the man of God was inside the cell he immediately noticed the fact. He called in a big hurry Mauro and shouted to him: "Run, brother Mauro, run, because Placido, who has gone to the water has fallen into the lake, and the waves are already carrying him away!".

Although the man of God was inside the cell he immediately noticed the fact.

He called hurriedly Mauro and shouted to him: "Run, brother Mauro, run, because Placido, who has gone to the water, has fallen into the lake, and the waves are already carrying him away!".

Then a wonderful miracle happened, that, after "Peter, the Apostle" had never happened again. Requested and received the blessing, Mauro "rushed flying" to carry out the command, that the Father he had expressed and convinced that he was still walking on earth, ran on the water to where the child was, dragged by the wave, he caught him by the hair and then, with a fast run, came back.

As soon as he touched the ground, he came to his senses, turned, saw and understood that he had walked on the water.

Amazed at having done something he would never have assumed he could do, he was startled and hurried to tell everything to the Father.

Benedict immediately attributed the prodigy to his prompt obedience, Mauro, on the other hand, insisted that everything could have happened only under his command and that he was not at all responsible for that miracle in which he had been the protagonist without even noticing.

In this friendly contest of humility, the child who had been saved intervened as a referee: "While I was coming saved from the water - he said - I saw the abbot's cloak over my head and felt that he was, he himself who was pulling me out."

Peter: The facts you tell are truly marvellous and I am sure they will help to the building of many. On my own, the more I listen to the miracles of this very good man and more I am thirsty for him.

## 8. The poisoned bread

Great religious fervour had developed in all the areas surrounding the Saint's residence, to the Lord Jesus Christ, our God; and many abandoned the life of the century to bend the pride of the heart under the light yoke of the Redeemer.

Unfortunately, however, there has always been the sad habit of the bad guys to hurt the virtue that others have, and they don't care in the least to have.

The priest of a near church named Fiorenzo the ancestor of Fiorenzo, our subdeacon, instigated by the evil spirit, began to burn with envy for the virtuous progress of the man of God and spread doubts about his holiness and to distract those who could from visiting him.

He noticed that, not only couldn't prevent his progress, but that the fame of his holiness spread more and more, and that many people chose the way of perfection, precisely, because of his reputation of holiness.

That's why he burned up with envy more and more, and he became every hour eviler, also because he would have praised just like him, for his commendable conduct, without living a commendable life.

Blinded by that dark envy, he planned, at last, a terrible decision.

He sent poisoned bread to the "servant of Almighty God", presenting it as blessed bread and as a sign of friendship.

The man of God accepted it with heartfelt thanks, but the pestiferous pitfall was not hidden from him that the bread hid.

At lunchtime, a crow usually came from the nearby forest and pecked at the bread from his hand.

He came that day too, and the man of God threw in front of him the bread received as a gift from the priest, he ordered to him: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, take this bread and throw it in a place where no man can find it".

The crow wide opened his beak, opened his wings and began to flutter around the bread and crisscrossing, he seemed to mean that he was ready to carry out the command, but a force prevented him. The servant of God had to repeatedly renew the command: "Take it, come on, take it without fear and go and throw it where it can be found never again". After having hesitated for a long time, finally grabbed it with his beak, lifted it and flew away.

He was back after three hours, without the bread, and then he got the food from the hand of the man of God. The venerable Father understood from this story, how much the priest's soul was raging against his life. And felt immense pain, not much for himself, but for the poor wretch.

In the meantime, however, Fiorenzo, since he was not able to kill the Master in the body, machined to ruin his disciples in the soul. For this scope, he let entered into the monastery vegetable garden, seven naked girls, that holding hands and dancing for a long time under their eyes, they had to light impure wishes in their soul.

The Saint noticed this and seriously feared that the disciples, still tender in the spirit, had to fall. He understood perfectly well, however, that all, was aimed to persecute only him.

And then he thought it was more appropriate to yield to the jealousy of others: he arranged very

well the monastery rules, he had built, establishing its superiors and adding other brothers; then, carrying with him only a few monks, he moved, to go to live elsewhere.

But the man of God had just drifted away to humbly avoiding the hatred of that man, that Almighty God didn't take long to punish him, with a terrible retribution.

So, He was standing on his terrace all gloating with joy at the news that Benedict had left, when suddenly, while the rest of the building remained standing, the balcony where he was, collapsed and crushing the enemy of Benedict.

His disciple Mauro thought that it was appropriate to report the news to the venerable Father, who maybe wasn't even more than ten miles away.

So he sent him to say: "Go back, Father, because the priest who had persecuted you is dead".

Hearing the news, the man of God burst directly into tears, both because the enemy was dead, and because the disciple was delighted.

On the contrary, he then imposed a "beautiful" penance on the same disciple, because sending that message, he had dared to be too happy for the disappearance of his enemy.

Peter: Your stories are so beautiful and marvellous. When he makes spring out water from the stone, I see a new Moses; when he recalls the iron from the deep water, a new Elisha (Eliseus); when he makes him walk over the water I think back to Peter, and when he demands obedience from the crowd, a new Elijah. When finally, I hear him cry because of the death of the enemy, I can only think of David. This man was truly filled, with the spirit of all the righteous!

Gregory: see, Peter, this man of God had only one spirit: that of the One Who through the grace of redemption, filled the hearts of all the elects. About Him, John says: "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world".

Of Him also, it's written: "From the fullness of Him, all of us we've received".

The saints of God could receive these powers from God, but they could not pass them on to others. The only one who granted to the disciples the power to work miracles was the One who promised to his enemies to give himself as a sign of Jonah: he deigned to die under the gaze of the proud and rise again under the gaze of the humble so that they might see a despicable thing in Him, this is instead an object of veneration and love.

For this mysterious economy, it happens that while the proud see in Him only the humiliation of death, the humble instead contemplate his Glorious Power over death.

Peter: now I would like to know two more things: where the holy man went and if he gave more signs of his miraculous power.

Gregory: so the holy man had decided to change his abode, but he couldn't change an enemy.

Later, in fact, not only did he have to endure even more serious fights, but he found himself ahead of fighting him openly, face to face, the Master of evil, himself.

The town of Cassino is located on the side of a high mountain which opening, welcomes this citadel like inside a basin, but after continues to rise for three miles, rushing the summit towards the sky.

There was on the top an ancient temple, where the "people of the fields" (peasants), according to the customs of the ancient pagans, performed superstitious rites in honour of Apollo.

Around it grooved groves, sacred to the demons, where, still in at that time, a fanatical crowd of infidels prepared sacrilegious sacrifices.

As soon as the man of God arrived there, he broke the idol into pieces, overturned the altar, uprooted the groves and where it was the temple of Apollo, erected an oratory in honour of St. Martin and where the altar was, it replaced with a chapel which he dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Then he turned to the people who lived there around and with assiduous preaching, invited them to the faith.

The ancient enemy, however, could not tolerate this activity and no longer occultly or in a dream, but with real apparitions, he began to disturb the tranquillity of the Father.

With loud cries, he complained of the violence he suffered and his screams reached the ears of his brothers, even without seeing his figure.

Him in person then, the venerable Father told his disciples that the ancient enemy appeared in front of his eyes, dreadful and furious, and with mouth and fire eyes, he made the move of rush against him.

What then he said, sometimes all could hear: first, he called him by name and since the Saint didn't give an answer, he vented then with furious insults. He screamed with a loud voice: "Benedict! Benedict!", But waiting in vain for an answer, he immediately added: "damned, not Benedict! Can you know what you have with me? Is it possible to know why you persecute me? ".

But of these struggles of the enemy against the servant of God, we will still have to see several others. He unleashed a ruthless war against him with all his might, without realizing that his despoil, he gave to him the opportunity of as many victories.

## **9. The stone becomes light**

One day, when monks built the monastery areas, something appears just there, in the between, a big stone, so they think to use it for the building.

The first time, they tried to move just in two people, after, three people but they can't lift it; they tried with many people again, but nothing to do: there it stood.

Always there. It seemed rooted on the ground. "it seems to sit the evil spirit on, physically - reasoned those monks - it's impossible that so many arms of men, can't move it?".

Since every effort was in vain, they tunk to send one to servant of God begging him to come to drive out the enemy with prayer and give them so, the possibility to lift the boulder.

He came soon, pray, gave the blessing, so the rock was lifted with great easily as it had no weight!

## **10. the fire in the kitchen**

Immediately after, the man of God ordered that the earth had to be dug out in that same spot. Penetrating very deep into the heart, the brothers discovered a bronze idol.

They threw it into the kitchen, for the moment, and they went back to work.

Suddenly was seen a flame out of the kitchen, under the eyes of all monks; it seemed to burn the

entire building. With loud cries of fear, they began to throw water, trying to put out the fire.

Struck by that din, the servant of God ran solicitous.

“But what fire do you see? - He exclaimed - it exist only in your eyes, I just don't see anything”.  
Then he bowed his head and prayed.

He then invited the monks illuded by that imaginary fire to watch a little better. The kitchen walls were intact and solid, and the illusory flames of “the ancient enemy” were no longer seen.

## **11. The little crushed monk**

Another time the monks were raising a wall because the building required it and the man of God was locked in his room, intent on prayer.

He came in front of him, mocking, the ancient enemy and warned him that he was going to pay a visit to the monks at work. With the utmost speed, the man of God sent one of his men running to warn the monks: “Do attention, brothers: the evil one is coming right now! ”.

The messenger hadn't even finished to speak that the evil spirit, overturning the wall under construction had buried and crushed under the rubble a small monk, the son of a curia employee. All filled with serious consternation and sadness, not for the collapsed wall but the crushed monk, they hastened to deal with tears of deep sorrow the news to the venerable Father Benedict.

“Go get him and bring here!” the Father ordered.

But it wasn't possible to transport him, though not on a blanket, because the stones of the fallen wall had not only crushed his flesh but also crushed the bones.

The man of God had him laid in his little room on the mat where he used to pray; then dismissed the brothers, closed the door and fell on his knees to pray with an insistence like never before.

And here's the miracle! Within the same hour, he sent the boy, healthy and robust, back to work as before, because he could complete the construction of the wall together with the other monks.

With the death of this child, the ancient enemy had deluded himself that he was mocking Benedict!

## **12. food, breaking the rule**

It was at this time that the Lord deigned to honour his servant with the gift of prophecy: he predicted future events and announced to those present, also about distant things and people.

It was a custom of his monastery that when the brothers left the house for some commissions, had to take absolutely nothing, neither food nor drink: a regular custom that it was observed with full rigour.

It happened one day, that some monks going out on errands, were forced to stay out, until much



later than expected. They knew the hospitable house of a pious woman: therefore they entered the house of that woman and they took food.

They returned to the monastery quite late and, as it's customary, they went to ask for the blessing of the Father.

As soon as he saw them, he immediately eagerly asked: "Where did you eat?". They replied: "Nowhere." He then said, "How? Come on, don't tell me lies! Have you not entered the house of that lady? And have you accepted such and such food? And have you drunk many and many glasses?".

To this precise indication of the venerable Father about the hospitality of the women, about the quality of foods, and the number of glasses, they sincerely realised what they had done and fell trembling at his feet, confessing their lack.

He immediately granted forgiveness, sure that those in his absence would never fail again; they had the proof that he was, in the spirit, always present.

### **13. the brother of monk Valentinano**

I have mentioned Valentinian's name above. This monk had a brother that lived in the world, but he was God-fearing.

Every year he left fasting his home and walked to the monastery to receive the blessing of the saint and at the same time pay a visit to his brother.

One day, precisely, while he was on the way to the monastery, he was accompanied by a wayfarer who was carrying something to eat on the way.

At a fairly advanced time, the stranger sent him the invitation: "Listen, brother, we want to take a bite? Otherwise our strengths will fail us on the way".

But he replied: "I'm so sorry, brother, but I can't; I got into the habit of always presenting myself fast to the venerable Father Benedict".

At this answer, the companion did not dare to insist for the moment: but made another piece of the road again repeats the invitation. The other held out because at whatever cost he wanted to get fast to the monastery. Also This time, the first stopped insisting and adapted to continue fast too, for a little while longer. But the way was getting longer, the hour was already late and they felt really tired walking.

To a curve, the road offered them a beautiful lawn and a water fountain, just what they better needed to finally repose the limbs.

And the companion exclaimed: "Oh, look, look; here, there is water, there is a beautiful meadow: it is the ideal place to eat something and rest for a little while.

After refreshed, we can resume the walking".

Those words were just flattering to the ear, as the place was to the eyes: he then allowed to persuade

by this third invitation and agreed to eat. Towards evening he arrived at the monastery.

He showed up to the venerable Father, he prayed for the blessing. But the Saint, without delay, he reproached him for what he had done on the journey.

He said to him, “Why, brother? You let yourself be overcome by the evil enemy, who spoke to you through the mouth of your travel companion! To the first he did not succeed in the attempt, not even on the second, he overtook you on the third, and unfortunately, he bent you to what he wanted!”.

The pious man then recognized his guilty weakness, and throwing himself at the saint's feet, he took to crying shamefully and confused, above all because he understood that, even far away, he had committed this fault, under the eyes of Father Benedict.

Peter: once again, in this fact of being present to an absent disciple, I see in the man of God the same spirit as the Prophet Elisha.

Gregory: it is good, Peter, that you don't interrupt me for now, so that you can experience wonders, even more relevant.

## **14. The simulation of King Totila**

At the time of the Goths, their king Totila, having heard that the saint was endowed with the spirit of prophecy, headed to his monastery.

He stopped a short distance away and sent word that he would be between little arrived.

He was told by the monks that he could certainly come.

Insincere, however, as he was, he wanted to prove whether the man of the Lord was truly a prophet. He had with him as a squire a certain Riggo: he had him put on his shoes, had him dressed in royal clothing and commanded him to go to the man of God, presenting himself as the king in person. He assigned as followers to him three counts among the most faithful and devoted: Vul, Ruderico and Blidino, who, in the presence of the servant of God, had to walk beside him, pretending to truly follow king Totila. To these, he also added other honorific signs and other squires, so that, both for their respects, both for their purple robes, was judged as the king truly.

As soon as Riggo entered the monastery, adorned with those magnificent garments, and surrounded by honours of the followers, the man of God was seated on an upper floor. Seeing him come forward, as soon as he was when he reached his voice, he cried aloud to him: “Lay down, son, lay down what you wear: it's not yours!”.

Afraid of presuming to deceive such a man, Riggo rushed immediately on the ground and, like him, all those who had followed him in this glorious undertaking.

Shortly after they stood up, but no one had the courage to get closer to the saint. They returned to their king and still bewildered told him how at first look, with impressive haste, they were immediately discovered.

## 15. the prophecy for Totila

Totila then went in person to the man of God. When from a distance he saw him sitting, not he dared to approach: he prostrated himself on the ground.

The servant of God shouted to him twice: "Get up!", but he didn't dare to get up in front of him. Then Benedict, this servant of God Jesus Christ, spontaneously deigned to approach the king and he himself lifted from the ground.

But later he scolded him for his misconduct and in a nutshell, he predicted what would happen to him. "You did very badly - he told him - and you are still doing a lot; it would be the time, for a good time, to put the end to your wickedness. You will now enter Rome, you will cross the sea, you will reign for nine years, at the tenth you will die".

These words terrified him deeply, he asked the saint to pray for him, then he left.

From that day on, his cruelty greatly diminished.

Not long after, he went to Rome, then returned to Sicily; in the tenth year of his reign, by the will of the almighty God, he lost his kingdom and his life.

The bishop of Canosa often came to see the servant of God, and Benedict loved him very much for his very worthy life.

One day he was talking with him about the Totila's entry into Rome and of the destruction of the city which by that king would have been destroyed and made uninhabitable.

The servant of God answered him: "Rome will not be destroyed by the barbarians; but affected by storms, hurricanes, and lightning earthquakes, it will fall by itself into ruin".

We see the mystery of this prophecy clearly manifested before our eyes because we see the walls demolished, the houses demolished, the churches destroyed by the whirlwind and the already crumbling buildings for long old age fall to the ground in ever-growing ruins.

This prophecy was reported to me by his disciple Onorato: however, he attested that he never had heard from his mouth but had been reported to him by the brothers who had heard him speak like this.

## 16. The cleric freed from the demon

Also around that time, there was a cleric tormented by the devil in the church of Aquino and his venerable bishop Costanzo had sent him in many places to the sepulchres of the martyrs, for obtain the grace of liberation.

But the holy martyrs didn't want to grant him this gift, because once again, let Benedict's grace be manifested.

They led him therefore to the saint and these pouring out in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ without delay freed him from the ancient enemy.

But immediately after healing him, the saint gave him this warning. "Now come back even at home; from now on, however, never eat meat and don't dare to access sacred orders because on the same day you will be given again to the mercy of the devil".

The healed cleric left and remained faithful to the advice of the man of God because, as often It happens, a recent punishment holds the soul tight in impression and fear.

But after many years, observing that the elders of him had back to the Lord and the younger clerics went to him advanced in his ecclesiastical career, he almost no longer took into account the words of the man of God forgotten for a long time and presented himself to receive the sacred order. But the devil who left him immediately took possession of him and didn't cease to torment him to the point of even taking his life.

Peter: If Benedict could see that cleric had been given to the devil why not dared to access sacred orders, it means that this man of God was also able to penetrate divine secrets?

Gregory: it's clear that he was able to know the secrets of God, precisely because he observed the precepts of God.

Is it not written, in fact: "Whoever is united to the Lord, forms one spirit with him"?

Peter: but then, if whoever is united to the Lord forms a single spirit with him, why is the distinguished one crier of the Gospel says: "Who knew the Lord's thought and who was his counsellor?"

It seems to me that it is not very logical that one ignores the thought of Him with whom he forms one spirit.

Gregory. To the saints, to the extent that they are one spirit with the Lord, the thought of Him. In fact, the same apostle says: "Who, among men, knows the things of man, if not the spirit of the man who is in him? So also no one knows the things of God except the spirit of God."

And to show that he knew the things of God, he added: "We have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit that comes from God". And a little later he adds: "Eye didn't see, ear didn't hear, and never entered the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him. To us, God has revealed it by His Spirit".

Peter: If, then, the things of God were revealed to the Apostle, as never before had exclaimed: "O sublime richness of the wisdom and science of God! How incomprehensible are his thoughts and inscrutable his ways!"?

But as I say this, another question arises in my mind.

The Prophet David says to the Lord: "With my lips, I exalt all the judgments of your mouth!"

Certainly being able to express is more than just knowing: so why does Paul affirm that God's judgments are incomprehensible, while David testifies that he not only knows them but that he has them also proclaimed with his mouth?

Gregory: Think carefully and you will see that I have already briefly answered both questions when

I told you that the saints, insofar as they are intimately united with God, do not ignore the thought of God.

All those who follow the Lord with pity, are united with the Lord for this very reason, but since they are still burdened by the weight of the corruptible body, they are not yet with Him. Therefore, as they are united with Him, they know the secrets of God; but insofar as they are disjointed, they ignore them.

Since therefore they don't yet fully perfectly penetrate his secrets, they confess that his thoughts are incomprehensible; however, being united to Him with the soul, receiving light either from Sacred Scripture or from private revelations, they know and once known they express them as well.

In a few words: the judgments that God hides from them, they don't know, those that God reveals to them, they know them.

For this, when David said: "With my lips, I expressed all thoughts" he immediately added: "of Your Mouth".

He clearly means this: "I was able to know and proclaim Your judgments, but only those that you openly revealed to me; because what You do not reveal means that you want to keep them hidden from our knowledge".

The words of the prophet and the Apostle therefore fully agree:

God's thoughts are incomprehensible, but after they are revealed from the mouth of Him, they can be proclaimed by human lips; they can be known and proclaimed in front of everyone; but only those that God has revealed; the others don't, they remain hidden.

Peter: I made these objections to you because I had some little doubts: now the question is perfectly clarified. And now, you still have a few more things to say about the virtues of our saint? Go on.

## **17. He predicts the destruction of his monastery**

Later, the advice of Father Benedict, came to the monastic life, a noble, named Teoprobo, and the saint had a confident familiarity with him because he was a man of upright morals.

One day he entered the Master's room and found him shedding bitter tears. He waited for a long, in silence, but the tears showed no sign of ending.

However, as soon as he realized that the man of God didn't cry out for fervour of prayer, as often happened to him, but for severe pain, approached and asked him the reason for so much grief.

The man of God immediately replied: "All this monastery that I have built and all the things I have prepared for the brothers, by the arrangement of Almighty God, they are destined to fall prey to the barbarians. With big effort, I managed to get lives spared, because He is in this place".

The words that at that time, Teoprobo heard, we see today come true: in fact, the news has reached us, that the monastery was recently destroyed by the Langobards.

In fact, they entered the monastery at night, during the slipping of the brothers, they robbed everything, but they could not get hold of a single person.

Almighty God thus kept what he promised to the faithful servant Benedict that is, giving the monastery at the mercy of the barbarians, but he would have guarded the lives.

It seems to me that in this circumstance, we can compare Benedict to the apostle Paul: when all things of his ship went to the bottom of the sea, he obtained the consolation of seeing the life of all those who accompanied him.

## **18. The theft of the little barrel**

You will certainly remember about that certain Esilarato, who lived here, among us as a monk. He, one day, was sent by his master to the monastery to bring two wooden containers to the man of God, commonly called “big flasks” (fiasconi), full of wine.

During the journey, he hid one along the way and the other he presented to the Father. The man of God, from whom even distant facts were not hidden, accepted with thanks that single barrel; but as the servant was about to resume his way back, he gave him this warns: “Be careful, son, to not drink from that flask that you have hidden; instead tilt it carefully and you'll see what's inside”.

The other was greatly surprised by those words and set out on the road. On the way back he wanted to make sure of the saint's warnings: he tilted the container and immediately a snake slipped out. Frightened and impressed by that nasty surprise, think for the subterfuge he had committed.

## **19. The nuns' handkerchiefs**

Not very far from the monastery, there was a district, for Benedict's preaching, a considerable number of people had converted from idol worship to faith in God. There was a small group thereof consecrated women and the servant of God took care to often send his monks there to assist spiritually those souls.

One day he sent one, as usual. After the little conference, the little monk, prayed by those holy women, accepted some handkerchiefs and hid them in his bosom.

As soon as he returned to the monastery, the servant of God began to reproach him with extreme severity: “how come - he kept repeating, why did iniquity enter your chest? ”.

That remained deeply amazed and not thinking about what he had done, he didn't understand well the reasons for the reproach.

The saint made him understand by telling: “and I wasn't there when you accepted those handkerchiefs from the servants of God and then did you hide them in your bosom?” .

Immediately then the monk threw himself at his feet and asking forgiveness for having acted without prudence, he took out of his chest the handkerchiefs that he had hidden there.

## **20. The superb thought of the little monk**

One day the venerable Father, already at the hour of vespers, took some food and one of his monks, a son of a lawyer, to him, held a lamp in front of the table.

While the man of God was eating and he stood there to serve, making to him the light, closed in silence, he began to ruminate in his soul, thoughts of pride, saying in his heart: “And who is this, that I should assist while eating, holding his lamp and serve him? Am I really someone who has to be a servant?”.

Turning suddenly to him, the servant of God took him heartily to reproach: “Make a sign of the cross on the heart, brother! What are you ruminating in your mind? Make a sign of the cross! ”.

Immediately called the other monks, he ordered them to remove the lamp from his hands, then telling him to also desist from that service and sit quietly in his seat.

Later, questioned by the brothers, what he had in his heart, the monk humbly told all that, in silence, he had formulated against the servant of God.

Then it appeared even more evident that nothing could be hidden from the venerable Benedict because reached his ears even the sound of words just thoughts.

## **21 flour at the gates of the monastery**

A great famine had occurred in those times in the regions of Campania and the great shortage of food put everyone in straits.

Also in the monastery of Benedict, the grain was finished: the loaves of bread had already been almost all consumed, so much so that one day at lunchtime no more than five were found.

The venerable Father observed the faces that were not too serene and wanted to correct with a sweet reproach their discouragement and moreover, to their relief, he added a promise: “ But why are you getting so much mad for the scarcity of bread? Today, it's true, there is just a little: but tomorrow you will see how much we will have plenty!”.

The next day in front of the monastery door, 200 bags of flour were found and until today it remains to be known which mysterious people the almighty God gave the task to bring them.

The brothers gave infinite thanks to the Lord and after that trial, they learned, never to doubt again of Providence even in times of hardship.

Peter: I ask you a question: we must think that the servant of God always had the gift of the prophecy, or was it illuminated only at intervals of time?

Gregory: I think so, Peter, that the prophecy spirit doesn't continuously spot the mind of prophets. It's written that the Holy Spirit "blow where it will"; so it must also be admitted that it blow when he wants. This is the reason why Nathan, questioned by the king if he was allowed to build the temple, first agreed, and then, forbade it.

So, also for Elisha, when he saw the woman crying and not knowing the reasons, he said to the servant who wanted to drive her away: "Leave her alone, because it shows that has a great pain, but I don't know what the causes are, because the Lord has not revealed them to me".

If God so wants, he does for merciful providence, because, now conceding, and now subtracting, the gift of prophecy, he elevates and at the same time, guards the souls of the prophets, so that when they receive the gift they perceive what God works in them, and when they are deprived of the charism know what they worth by themselves.

Peter: your reasons convince me that this must be the case. Let's pick up again the stories of Father Benedict if you still have some other in mind.

## **22. a factory regulated in vision**

Gregory: Another time he was asked by a good christian to send some disciples to a landed property owned by him near Terracina because he wanted to build a monastery there.

He gladly agreed: he chose the monks and named who should be the Abbot and who the second after him. Upon departure, he made this commitment: "Now you leave immediately: on that day I will also come and show you where you will have to build the chapel, where the refectory, where the guest quarters and where other rooms are needed ". Those received the blessing, set out.

Meanwhile, in impatient expectation of the appointed day, they began to prepare every those thing that seemed necessary to them for those who would accompany the revered Father.

But on the same night where the day of the promise begun, the man of God appeared in a dream to the holy man designated by him as Abbot and to his Prior and traced them, with the most meticulous indications, the individual positions that were suitable dare to each room.

Just waked up they told each other what they had seen.

But they thought better to do it a laugh about this unimportant vision and they waited anxiously for the promise coming of the man of God.

But the appointed day no one came. A little disappointed and saddened they returned to the saint to tell him: "And how is it, Father, that you didn't come? We've been waiting for a long time! You promised us that you would come to show us where and how we should build the buildings. How is it?".



And he to them: “Why, brothers, do you speak in this way? Is it really true that I didn't come, according to promise?”.

“And when did you come ?”

“But you don't remember that you both saw me during sleep and I mapped the location of individual rooms? Come on, come back, and build every ward of the monastery just as you have seen in the vision ...”.

Let's imagine their wonder! They returned with joy at the said land and they built the individual parts of the monastery as the revelation had indicated to them.

Peter: I have some doubts. I would like to know how he could go far to teach people who slept and these hear him in vision and recognize him.

Gregory: why, Peter, are you perplexed, examining how the event unfolded? You will understand it if you will remember first of all that the spirit is by nature, much more agile than the body.

In fact, for the testimony of the Scripture, we know that a prophet was lifted in Judea with lunch that he brought and in the blink of an eye placed in Chaldea and then, after having refreshed another prophet with food, again he found himself in Judea.

If Habakkuk in an instant could go so far with his body and carry even a lunch, why be surprised that Father Benedict has obtained to go in spirit, to indicate the different needs to the spirit of sleeping monks? As the prophet had gone with body to deliver corporal food, so Benedict was present with the spirit to organize things of spiritual life.

Peter: your answer erased, I would say almost with hand, all my doubts. I wish now to know what his ordinary way of speaking was.

## **23. Nuns reconciled through the Sacrifice**

Gregory: It was difficult, Peter, that even the ordinary talk of the saint was not full of prodigious effectiveness, because his heart was raised to high things and therefore there was no word of his mouth that falling in vain. Also when he happened to utter something not decisive but of the simple threat, even then his word had so much strength, as if he had spoken it not with a hesitant or conditioned soul, but as a true expression of will.

Not far from his monastery, two nuns, belonging to noble families, lived the religious observance in their home; For the things needed outside, a good man, very religious and zealous, served them. Unfortunately, it often happens that the nobility of birth provokes in some a kind of vulgarity of mind, perhaps because thinking back that they have been a little more than the others, they are less likely to despise themselves in this world.

In short, these two nuns had not yet tightened the brakes on their own language, wearing the monastic habit too, and often with their rude words, they provoked that pious man to anger that he needed.

For a long time, he managed to tolerate them, but in the end, he presented himself to the man of

God and he told him of the many insults, he had to undergo.

The man of God listened well to what he did it was narrated and immediately sent to say to those like this: "Hold yours a little more in check language, because, if you do not amend yourselves, I will take away communion".

Certainly, he did not mean by these words to launch ex-communication, but only to threaten it.

But those continued, without changing the old habits at all.

A few days later they died and were buried in the church.

It then happened this: every time that in that church was celebrated the solemn Mass the deacon ordered: "Let anyone who is excommunicated go out!", their old nurse, who used to offer oblate in their suffrage, saw them come out of their tomb and leave the church.

Having observed several times that precisely at the voice of the deacon they could not stay in church, he remembered the command that the man of God had sent them while they were living, that is, that he would have deprived them of communion if not were amended in ways and words.

Then she sadly informed the servant of God, who, with his own hand, gave her an offering saying: "go and have this oblation offered to the Lord for them and they will be dissolved by the ex-communication".

In fact, after the offering was sacrificed for them when the deacon intimated to the excommunicated to go out, they were never seen to go out again.

From this, it became evident that the Lord had readmitted them to his communion through the intercession of the servant of God because they no longer left their place in the church, as excommunicated people.

Peter: to me it seems unlikely that a man, however venerable and most holy he may be, but still living in this mortal flesh, he could absolve souls who had already presented themselves to invisible judgment.

Gregory: Dear Peter, and he wasn't in this life who heard said to him: "whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, and what you loosen on earth will also be loosed in heaven"?

In this office of binding and loosing is now succeeded by those who worthily and with faith is constituted in the sacred government.

But in order for the earthly man to have such power, the Creator of the Heaven and earth descended from heaven to earth and became Man for men - He Who was God - deigned to grant man made up of flesh the faculty of judging also on the things of the spirit.

At the very moment when the power of God descended to the point of becoming the weakness, right at that moment, our weakness was elevated above itself.

Peter: your reasoning perfectly harmonized with the wonders you told me.

## 24. the little fugitive monk

Gregory: among his monks, Benedict has one, still a young man, who was spending a little too much the limits in affection for parents. One day without asking for the blessing at all came out of the monastery and went home.

But the same day, shortly after arriving, he was taken ill and died.

They buried him, but the next day they found that his body had been thrown out of the earth.

He was buried again, but the next day here is the same phenomenon again: pushed out and unburied as before.

They thought of running quickly to the feet of Father Benedict, and they begged him with great tears, that he deign to readmit him in the forgiveness of him.

The man of God without delay handed over to them, of his own hand, the Host of the Lord's Body, saying: "Go and with great reverence place on his breast the Body of the Lord, and so bury him".

They carried out these instructions and the earth received the child's body and never rejected it again.

Now, Peter, you can measure well how much merit he had in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ a such a holy man: even the earth refused to welcome someone who was not in Benedict's favour.

Peter: I noticed it very well and I am immensely amazed.

## 25. the monk and the big dragon

Gregory: he also had a weak and fickle monk: tired to be in the monastery he wanted to go away.

The man of God was assiduous in taking him back and often worked hard to make him the courage; but for no reason, he wanted to consent to persevere in the community, indeed he didn't stop bothering them to let him go.

Finally, the venerable Father overwhelmed a day from his importunity, he commanded him with disdain to go away as well.

He had just come out of the door of the monastery when suddenly a dragon with gaping jaws, who wanted to devour him at any cost.

Terrified and trembling he gave himself up shouting in a loud voice: "Help help! There is a dragon that wants to devour me!".

The brothers ran, but they saw no dragon.

They brought him back inside the monastery walls, more dead than alive, and he, right on the spot, promised that would never go away again.

In fact, he persevered in his promise. It was the saint's prayers that made him see the dragon was thrown at him, that dragon who previously, not visible, he followed.

## 26. The healed Elephant Man

There is another fact that I think it's good not to leave in silence. I was told by the illustrious e noble Antonio.

He told me, so, that a boy of his father was found infected with elephantiasis and already for hair loss, because of the swelling of the skin and the purulent matter, he could no longer hide his evil. The father had him brought to the man of God and instantly he was returned to primitive sanity.

## 27. The paid debtor

I want to tell yet another fact, reported very often by his disciple Pellegrino. There he is.

A poor man, a good Christian, pushed by the urgency to pay a debt, thought that it was not there more to do than go to the man of God and show him the urgent need.

In fact, he went there, found the servant of God and confided to him that for twelve sous he was harshly oppressed by the creditor.

The venerable Father pointed out to him that unfortunately, he didn't have that twelve sous; he encouraged him with good words to not be disheartened by his poverty, and dismissing him he said: "For now go home; but come back in a couple of days because what you ask, for today, we don't have it".

During those two days, he addressed persistent prayers to the Lord. On the third day, that poor debtor in distress was already back.

Suddenly, on a chest of the monastery, full of wheat, were discovered thirteen coins.

The man of God had them brought and handed them over to the poor man, who was more grieved, telling him that twelve were for restitution, the other would keep it for himself, for his own needs.

It seems to me that it's appropriate to insert here some of those facts that, as I mentioned at the beginning of this conversation, they were told me by his four disciples.

Here is one.

A man had the misfortune to be bitterly envied by his opponent and the hatred of this one went so far as to throw a poison, unbeknownst to him, into a drink.

Fortunately, the poison didn't have the strength enough to take his life, however, it produced to him, on the skin of the whole body, spots of various colours, which, watching them, looked very much like leprosy.

Conducted to the man of God, as soon as he touched him, every stain immediately disappeared from his skin and soon regained complete health.

## **28. The bottle that doesn't break**

In the time when Campania was desolated by a very serious famine, the man of God had given away in alms to many poor people all the provisions that were in the monastery. In the pantry it was not there is nothing left but a little oil in a glass cruet.

It happened to a sub-deacon named Agapito and strongly asked if he could have the charity of a little oil. The man of God, who had proposed to give everything away on earth to deposit everything in the treasures of Heaven, ordered, without a doubt that the little that was left be delivered to him.

The monk in charge of the pantry felt the superior's regulation very well, but he didn't have just the desire to put it into practice. Asked shortly after by the saint if it had been done that almsgiving as he had commanded, the monk replied that he had not given anything because if he had given that away too, there would be nothing left for the monks.

Then he commanded with energetic severity that the cruet be immediately thrown out of the window glass with oil so that nothing remained in the pantry for disobedience, and it was done so.

A great precipice opened under the window, bristling with large boulders. The glass cruet fell with violence on the stones, but remained intact as if it hadn't been thrown: it didn't break, nor the oil poured.

The man of God had it collected and, intact as it was, he had immediately delivered to who asked for it. After gathering the brothers, he rebuked the disobedient monk in front of everyone, because he had been unfaithful and proud.

## **29. The empty amphora filled with oil**

When the reproof is over, together with all the brothers he gathered in prayer. In the same place where they prayed, there was a terracotta amphora, empty and covered.

As the Saint While the saint persisted in the petition, the lid of the amphora began to rise due to the growing oil: and grew to such an extent that, removed the lid, it overflowed from the edges of the container until it flooded to the floor.

At that sight, Benedict finished the prayer and at the same moment, the oil also stopped flowing.

He took advantage of this to soften, with more persuasive arguments, the disobedient monk, because he learn to have more trust and humility. The monk so salutary correct was full of confusion because Benedict had proved with a miracle the omnipotence of God to which he had referred in reproaching him.

No one later dared to doubt what he promised anymore, after seeing that, in the space of a few moments, in exchange for an almost empty glass jar, he had procured an amphora filled with oil.

## 30. The monk freed from the demon

One day he went up to the oratory of Blessed John, located on the top of a mountain when he did he met the ancient enemy in the guise of none other than a veterinarian, holding the box of medicines and a rope.

Benedict asked him “Where are you going?”. He replied: “I am going to the monks, to give a little purge”.

The venerable Father continued the same towards the oratory and finished the prayer took the way back in great haste. Meanwhile, the bad spirit had met with an old monk who drew water, in a flash he had entered him, had thrown him to the ground, and beaten him with ferocious cruelty.

Back from prayer, seeing the poor man tormented with so much violence, the servant of God undoubtedly slapped him, and that was enough to immediately drive away, the spirit, which didn't dare to get close to him again.

Peter: I would like to know one thing: he always worked these miracles by the strength of his prayer, or did he sometimes operate them even with the sole act of the will?

Gregory: those who adhere to God with full dedication of soul, if necessity requires it, they know how to work miracles in both ways, sometimes by virtue of prayer and other times by own power. John says: “To those who welcomed him, he gave them the power to become children of God”. And so is therefore it's no wonder that whoever is a child of God by the power granted to him, has the power to work miracles.

That the saints, then, can work miracles in both ways, gave the proof Peter, who raised from the dead Tabitha with prayer and instead, with reproach, sentenced the two to death, the liars Ananias and Sapphira: we don't read that he prayed for them to die, but simply there he scolded harshly for the guilt that they had committed.

It's therefore clear that they work miracles, sometimes, with their own authority, and sometimes because they have asked God: Peter took their life from these with a reproof, gave it back, with a prayer.

And now, as proof of what I've said, I want to tell you two more facts of the servant of God Benedict, in one of which it is clear that he worked to be able to communicate to him by God, in the other instead of that, he obtained by virtue of prayer.

## 31. A liberating look

At the time of King Totila, a Goth named Zalla, a follower of the Arian heresy, raged with incredible frightening cruelty against the Catholic faithful and whoever came into their hands, cleric or monk that he was, he sent him without compliments to the Creator.

One day, devoured by stinginess and lust for money, he tortured a peasant, torturing him with

various tortures.

Exhausted by the pains, the poor man declared that he had entrusted all his assets to the servant of God Benedict.

So he hoped that the executioner, believing him, he would stop for a moment his cruelty, granting him, so still some instants of life.

Zalla, indeed, stopped torturing him by then but tied his arms with a big rope, so he pushed him in front of his horse because he leads him to Benedict, who had in charge of his riches.

With his arms tied like that, the peasant went on to the monastery where he was the saint, and he found him alone, in front of the door, intent on reading.

He then turned to the ferocious Zalla and: "Here he is - he said - this is that Father Benedict of whom I talked to you".

The latter, furious, with mad and perverse intention, first he looked him up and down, then thinking of instilling the fright, that he used with others, he began to shout loudly: "Come on, come on, without fuss, stand up and take out this villain's stuff you've got!".

At those cries, the man of God immediately raised his eyes calmly from reading, turned a glance to the Goth and then turned his eye also on the poor tied peasant.

Just in the instant in which he turned the eyes on his arms, a prodigy happened! ... The ropes began to untie with a lot of swiftness like no man could have.

At the sight of the farmer who, first tied up, suddenly stood there in front of him free from bonds, Zalla was frightened by so much power; he fell to the ground and bending the hard cruel cervix to the feet of the saint, he recommended himself to his prayers.

The saint didn't get up from reading but called some monks, he commanded them to take him inside and set the blessed table for him.

When they led him back out, he admonished him to stop with so many cruelties.

And he went away humiliated and never dared to ask that poor man anything more the man of God, not with weapons, but with just his eyes, had freed.

Here is what I told you, Peter: those who serve Almighty God with the greatest fidelity, can sometimes work miracles by the power given to them by God.

The saint, in fact, who, sitting down, repressed the ferocity of the terrible goth and with his eyes broke the knotted ropes who chained innocent arms, with the instantaneity of the miracle clearly means by power received he had been allowed to do so.

## **32. The risen child**

Now, instead, I will tell another great miracle that he obtained with the prayer.

One day the Father had gone out with his brothers to work in the fields, when he arrived at the Monastery a farmer who, crying in very hot tears, held the body of his deceased son in his arms and he asked anxiously about Father Benedict.

When he was told that he was with his brothers working in the fields, without waiting a moment,

placed the corpse of his son in front of the door and, distraught by grief, set off at a hasty run in search of the venerable Father.

At that same hour, the man of God was already returning from work. As soon as the farmer saw him, he began to shout: "Give me back my son, give me back my son!" The man of God stopped for a moment and he asked: "But when did I ever take your son from you?" And the other: "he is dead: come and give him life".

At these words, the servant of God was very sad and turned to the surrounding people who insisted: "Do not insist, brothers! He said - do not insist! These actions belong to the holy Apostles, not to our poor strength. Why do you want to impose a burden on us that we are unable to bear?"

The good man, however, gripped by immense pain, persisted in his request, swearing that he would not he would have left there if he had not raised his son.

So the servant of God asked him: "Where is he?" he replied: "his body lies in the doorway of the monastery ...".

As soon as the man of God arrived, followed by his brothers, he bent his knees on the ground and prostrated himself, above the little body of the child.

Then rising, he stretched out his arms to heaven and prayed: "Lord, do not look at my sins, but the faith of this man who asks for the resurrection of his son, and You give back to this little body the soul you took away".

He had just finished saying these words, that the little boy's body, for the return of the soul, he began to shudder and under the eyes of all those present, he was seen quivering and throbbing with miraculous shaking.

The saint took him by the hand and, alive and well, returned him to his father.

Here it's clear, Peter, that this miracle did not work out of the power possessed, because, in order to be able to accomplish this, he had to ask him, prostrated on the ground.

Peter: there is no doubt that it's just as you say: your doctrine is fully proven with facts.

Now I would like you to explain to me if the saints can do everything they want and if they get everything they want.

### **33. The miracle of his sister Scholastica**

Gregory: Do you think, Peter, that in the world there was someone more worthy than Paul?

Yet he pleaded three times the Lord to be freed from the urge of the flesh, and he could not get as much he wanted.

Therefore it's necessary that I tell you how there was one thing that the venerable Benedict desired, but he was not allowed to obtain it.

He had a sister named Scholastica, who since childhood had also consecrated herself to the Lord. She used to come to visit him, once a year, and the man of God went down to meet him, not far



outside the door, in a possession of the Monastery.

One day, so, she came and her venerable brother came down to meet her with some disciples. They spent the whole day in the praises of God and in holy talks, and when the evening began to come, they ate some food together. They lingered again at the table and with the prolonged of saints' talks, the hour had gone on longer than usual.

At a certain point, the pious sister addressed this prayer to him: "I really ask you please: don't leave me for tonight, but let's stop until morning, to foretaste, with our conversations, the joys of heaven ...".

But he answered her: "But what are you saying, sister? I absolutely cannot stay overnight outside the monastery".

The serenity of the sky was total: not even a cloud could be seen on the horizon. When her brother answered in the negative, the nun placed her hands with folded fingers on the table, he leaned over his head and immersed herself in deep prayer.

When he lifted his head from the table, it did unleash a storm of lightning and thunder together with a deluge of water, in such quantities that neither the venerable Benedict, nor the monks who were with him were able to set foot outside the house.

The holy woman, reclining her head in her hands, had spread a river of tears on the table, for her such as the blue of the sky had turned into rain. Not even at an instant's interval temporal followed the prayer: but the simultaneity between prayer and rain was so great that she raised his head from the table together with the first thunder: it was one and the same moment to raise his head and precipitate the rain.

The man of God immediately understood that in the midst of that lightning, thunder, and frightening storm it was impossible to return to the monastery and then, somewhat saddened, he began to complain to his sister: "May Almighty God forgives you, blessed sister; but what have you done? ".

She replied, "You see, I prayed you, and you didn't want to listen to me; I prayed to my Lord and He listened to me. Now go out, if you can: and leave me here and go back to your monastery". By now it was just impossible to go out and he, who would not have wanted it on his own initiative, was forced to stay there against his will.

And so they all spent the night watching and yes they filled their souls with sacred speeches, exchanging experiences of spiritual life with each other. With this tale, I wanted to show that he wanted something but failed to get it.

Certainly, if we consider the provisions of the venerable Father, he would have wanted the heaven to remain as clear as to when he had come down; but contrary to what he wanted, he's facing in front of a miracle, torn from the Divine Omnipotence from the heart of a woman.

And it's no wonder that a woman, eager to stay longer with the brother, on that occasion he had more power than him because according to the doctrine of John: "God is love".

It was therefore quite right that the one who loved the most could do more!

Peter: I confess that I really like these stories.

### **34. His sister's soul flies to the sky**

Gregory: the following day both, brother and sister, returned to their monastery.

Three days later Benedict was in his room praying.

Rolling his eyes, he saw the soul of his sister who, out of the body, walked in the shape of a dove, towards the mysterious depths of the skies.

Filled with joy, for having seen her so glorious, he gave thanks to Almighty God with hymns and songs of praise, then went to join the brothers in the departure of her.

He then immediately sent some, because they carried his body to the monastery and buried her in the tomb he already had prepared for himself.

Thus it came about that not even the tomb could separate those two souls, whose mind it had been one soul in God.

### **35. the vision of the world and Germano's soul.**

A certain Servando, deacon and abbot of that monastery that the patrician Liberius built-in Campania region, was customary to pay him a friendly visit from time to time.

He did this because he was also filled with celestial doctrine and so they transfused each other comfortable words of life and not yet being able to taste the sweet food of the heavenly homeland, they ate it at least with ardour desire.

Once they stayed long enough that it was already time to go to rest.

Benedict had retired to rest on the upper floor of that tower that rose to dominate the whole town, Servando in the lower rooms: the two floors, however, were in communication by means of a comfortable staircase.

In front, of the tower then, extended a larger building, where the disciples of one and other, took storage.

While the brothers slept, Benedict prolonged the vigil in anticipation of the nocturnal prayer, and standing, near the window, was praying. Suddenly, staring at the eye in the deep darkness of the night, he saw a light descending from above that dispelled the dense darkness and spread such an intense light even daylight to overcome.

In this vision, a wonderful phenomenon took place, that he then told himself: the whole world was placed before his eyes, almost gathered under an only ray of sunshine. While gazing at the splendours of that dazzling light, he saw the soul of Germano, Bishop of Capua, carried by angels, gathered in a globe of fire.

Wanting therefore to have a witness of such an admirable prodigy, he repeatedly called out to two or three times, the deacon Servando.

The latter, impressed by the man's unusual cries, ran up fast, he also looked and could see with wonder the last fading of that marvellous light, while the man of God completed the story of what he had seen, arousing in him deep amazement at the great miracle.

Immediately afterwards he sent a messenger to Cassino to the monk Theoprobos, because in the same night he went to Capua and inquired, and then reported, what had happened to the bishop Germano. The order was executed.

The envoy found the most reverend Bishop Germano already dead, and, inquiring about the circumstances of death, he turned out that it coincided precisely with that moment in which the man of God had contemplated his elevation to heaven.

Peter: - It is a wonderful and stupendous Miracle!

But what does it mean that the whole world was presented before his eyes, as collected in a ray of sunshine? Since it never happened to me, then I just can't imagine how it could happen that one man can see the whole world.

Gregory: Peter, keep in mind what I tell you: to the soul that contemplates the Creator, every creature is a very small thing.

When it sees a glimmer of the Creator, however small it may be, small everything created becomes to him.

For the light itself that contemplates inwardly, the capacity of intelligence expands and expands so much in God that finds above the world. Indeed the soul of the contemplative rises also above herself.

Raptured in the light of God, it expands inwardly above itself and when lifted up it regards below itself, it understands how small is what he had not been able to contemplate from below.

The man of God, therefore, who stared at the globe of fire and the angels returning to heaven did not he could contemplate these things except in the light of God. It is, therefore, no wonder that he saw gathered before him the whole world, because, raised to heaven in the intellectual light, he was out of the creation.

The whole world is said to be gathered before him, not because the sky and the earth had shrunk, but because the spirit of the seer had expanded, so that, enraptured in God, he could without difficulty contemplate what lies beneath God. Therefore in that light which shone in his bodily eyes, the inner light of the mind, which in the rapture of the soul, showed him how small all things down here were.

Peter: I realize that it was good for me not to have understood what you said earlier.

My dullness has occasioned these truly sublime expositions of yours. Now I understand the matter very well and then, if you don't mind, pick up the thread of the story.

## **36. The monastic rule**

Gregory: I would like it very much, Peter, to prolong myself still in the story of the facts of this venerable Father, but I must deliberately omit many things because it's necessary that I'm about to narrate the lives of others as well.

There's, therefore, an interesting thing, that you must not ignore, that is, the man of God, in addition to many miracles that made him so well known in the world also shone through an exceptional exhibition of doctrine.

In fact, he also wrote a rule for monks, a rule characterized by a singular discretion and displayed in very clear form.

Really, if someone wants to know in depth the customs and life of the saint, can find out in the teaching of the rule all the documents of his magisterium, in teaching the rule, because this man of God certainly did not give any teaching, without having first realized it himself in his life.

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## **37. The passage to eternity**

In the same year in which he was to die, he announced the day of his most blessed transit to his disciples, some of whom lived with him and others who were far away. To those present he ordered to silently guarding this news, he pointed out, to those in the distance, exactly which sign would warn them that his soul was detaching from his body.

Six days before his death, he had the tomb opened. Then attacked by fever, he began to be prostrated by the most ardent heat.

Because from day to day the exhaustion became more and more serious, on the sixth day he was transported by the disciples to the oratory, where he strengthened himself for the great passage by receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord.

Supporting his limbs, without strength, in the arms of the disciples, standing, with raised hands to heaven, between the words of prayer, he breathed her last breath.

On that same day appeared to two brothers, one of whom was in the monastery, the other outside, an identical vision.

They saw a street, carpeted with tapestries and resplendent with innumerable lamps, leading from his room turning towards the east it rose straight towards the sky.

At the top was a character from venerable look and radiant with light, which asked them the whose way they contemplated. They confessed that they did not know.

“This - he said - is the way in which Benedict, a friend of God, is ascended to heaven”.

Thus those present and those far away saw and knew from that foretold sign the death of the saint. He was buried in the oratory of Blessed John the Baptist, an oratory that he had built, after having destroyed the temple of Apollo.

And up to our days, if the faith of those who pray requires him, he shines for miracles also in that Speco of Subiaco, where he lived in the early days of his religious life.

## **38. The madwoman healed in the Speco**

The fact that I am now telling has happened these days.

A woman who had completely lost her mind due to mental illness was wandering about mountains and valleys along the woods and across the fields, day and night, and she only stopped when her fatigue forced her.

One day in his crazy wandering, he happened upon the Blessed Father's Speco Benedict and entered like this, unbeknownst to him, he stopped there, inside and spent the whole night there.

At dawn, she walked out of it, but with reason in such perfect balance, as if not she had ever suffered from mental illness. Thereafter, as long as she lived, she never lost the regained health.

Peter: I cannot understand well what it's said so often, that is, that you receive more benefits through the relics of the martyrs than in the shrines of the martyrs themselves where there is their body.

In other words, it's said that they operate greater benefits where there isn't their sepulchre.

Gregory: there is no doubt, Peter, that in the places where the holy martyrs rest with their bodies, many are the miracles worked through their intercession: to those who pray with the righteousness of soul they distribute graces without number.

But the doubt can easily arise for men of little faith if the saints are present where it's known that they don't rest with their bodies. Then here's the need for them to show greater wonders precisely where weak souls have reason to doubt their presence.

On the other hand, those who have a firm mind in God, acquire much more merit in faith, how much more they believe they will be heard, where the martyrs do not have a sepulchre. It's understood now because of the same Truth, to increase faith in the disciples, He had this to say: "If I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you".

In truth, the Paraclete always proceeds from the Father and the Son: and then why does the Son say that he will go away to bring him, who is never separated from the Son?

Precisely because the disciples, who saw the Lord bodily, longed to see him always corporally, precisely, for this reason, they were told: "If I don't go, the Paraclete will not come", almost wanted to openly teach: "If I don't remove the body I will not be able to show who the Spirit is, which is Love; and if you don't stop looking at Me with the eye of the body, you will never learn to love Me in the spiritual way".

Peter: Now I am convinced.

Gregory: Now it will be good, Peter, to suspend our talks for a while.

Meanwhile, waiting to start over soon the story of the miracles of other saints, we restore, with a little silence, our energies.

*End of the II Book of Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great*